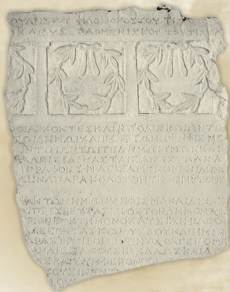


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ANCIENT GREEK LETTER WRITING

A Cultural History (600–150 BC)



PAOLA CECCARELLI

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A Cultural History
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PAOLA CECCARELLI

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Preface

My interest in letter writing began with the idea of a new edition with commentary of the correspondence of the Seleucid kings: I wanted to look at the way the medium inflected the meaning, at the influence of the epistolary form on the content and its reception. But these letters functioned in a context, a context that is lost to us, although we constantly try to reconstruct it. I thus realized that if I wanted to understand something about the way royal letters functioned in the Greek world, I had to widen the enquiry, and in two directions. On the one hand, I needed to offer a contrastive analysis of the functioning of letters and other forms of mediated communication, that is, to contextualize letter writing within communicative practices, as well as more generally within the larger field of writing. On the other hand, I needed to look at both 'real' letters and documents, and at letters and documents embedded in a narrative: for only the latter would provide an 'original' context, even if bent by the laws of the literary genre in question. As a result, this book moves to and fro between real, epigraphically preserved letters (from the archaic to the Hellenistic period, including both everyday and royal correspondence); real documents (decrees for instance); literary letters, in particular the letters embedded in the work of the ancient historians, in drama, and in the speeches of the Athenian orators; and other types of embedded documents, among which are oral messages as one of the forms taken by mediated communication in the ancient world. Moreover, because I was interested not only in writing and letter writing, but also in the connotations of these documents, in how the Greeks had perceived them, I have given attention to Greek narratives concerning the invention of writing, and the move towards an epistolary format; these narratives have been contrasted with the actual (Greek) documentation, but also occasionally with Near Eastern narratives of the origins of writing and epistolary writing.

Interest in ancient letters has been growing in recent years; a quick glance at Klauck's masterful survey (2006) shows how much has been written on the subject by both literary critics and historians. The former have produced a number of studies on letter writing in specific authors and on epistolary collections, offering literary and in particular narratological analyses of the way the letter functions in the context of larger narratives (drama, historiography, and especially the novel).¹ The renewed interest in ancient epistolary writing is also behind the recent publications of collections of translated ancient letters.²

Ever since Bentley's epoch-making dissertation on the letters of Phalaris, the issue of the authenticity of the literary letters by famous historical personalities has attracted attention. Studies on specific corpora (the letters of Alexander, of

¹ Recent instances of this approach include Rosenmeyer 2001; Jenkins 2006; the papers in Morello and Morrison 2007; Olson 2010. Studies on the ancient novel (in particular the seminal collection edited by Holzberg 1994) paved the way for this approach.

² Costa 2002 and Rosenmeyer 2006 focus on the literary and fictional; Trapp 2003 has a wider scope.

Phalaris, and of Themistocles) and on the authenticity of royal or seemingly official letters embedded in literary texts continue to appear, but the focus has now shifted from the issue of authenticity to determining the function, organization, and *Sitz im Leben* of these corpora.³

As for 'real' letters, new documentary material, and in particular letters on papyri (or, for the Roman world, those written in ink on the extraordinary wooden leaf tablets from Vindolanda), have made it possible to come close in an unprecedented way to the everyday life of a woman in Graeco-Roman Egypt, or to that led by a Roman soldier posted in a garrison on Hadrian's Wall; a find like that of Vindolanda has also made it clear how widespread literacy and epistolary contacts were, even at the periphery of the Roman world. Thus some of the recent scholarship on ancient letters has led to an extraordinary advance in our understanding of levels of literacy, and more generally of life and gender-relationships, in Roman Egypt, in Roman Britain, and indeed in the ancient world *tout court*.⁴ The new material has also enabled further work on the typology and phraseology of ancient letters.⁵

Other new documents, in the shape of Greek letters on lead or ceramic published only in very recent years, now make it possible to attempt a more detailed narrative of the development of letter writing, from its origins as the transposition into writing of an oral message given to a messenger, to its becoming the main instrument through which Hellenistic kings communicated with the Greek poleis. Welles's *Royal Correspondence of the Hellenistic Period* (1934) is still the landmark study of the official letters preserved on stone; since then, with the exceptions we shall look at presently, there have been important publications concerning specific letters or groups of documents, but no general study of the use of letters for official communication in ancient Greece. Attempts have, however, been made at looking into the articulation between personal and official letter writing, and more generally at exploring the question of the origin of the official letter (a question that had already been posed by Welles).⁶

New ideas and impulsions in respect to the connotations of the letter as a communicative medium have come from studies dealing with the diffusion of news and information in the ancient world (e.g. Longo 1981, Lewis 1996), and even more from some recent approaches to the royal correspondence in the Hellenistic period. Jean-Marie Bertrand's seminal article 'Formes de discours politique: décrets des cités grecques et correspondance des rois hellénistiques', first published in 1985, underlined the distinction between decrees of the city-states and royal letters, two antithetical, yet interrelated forms of public written discourse. John Ma has further shown how the Seleucid kings and the cities

³ On letter collections see e.g. Cortassa and Culasso-Gastaldi 1990 (Themistocles); Hinz 2001 (Phalaris); Merkelbach 1954 (Alexander). Royal letters in literary texts: Gauger 2000. General discussion in Rosenmeyer (2001: 169–233) and Trapp (2003: 23–37).

⁴ Egypt: Bagnall and Cribiore 2006; Vindolanda: Bowman and Thomas 1983, 1994, 2003, now at <<http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk>>; Bowman 1998; synthesis: Muir 2009.

⁵ Formal classification (mainly the prescript): Exler 1923; phraseology: Koskeniemi 1956. For more recent work see the bibliography in Schmidt 1997: 775. On syntax and pragmatics of non-literary Latin letters, Halla-Aho 2009.

⁶ Van den Hout 1949; Stirewalt 1993, an uneven work, with some excellent ideas; Porciani 1997.

interacted, under the sign of a shared euergetic language, by exchanging letters and decrees.⁷

The contrast between city-decree and royal letter appears as a significant moment in a long process. It is this process I am interested in: how letter writing comes to define itself in relationship to the other writing practices of the polis. In terms of methodology, a historically grounded understanding of letter writing and its evolution has to be framed within a discussion of the uses of literacy and orality in the archaic and classical world, of the relation of writing to specific political forms, and of the larger question of the communication between individuals, poleis, and kings. Thus, at the centre of this book will be the distinctions between 'letters', or, to be more precise, 'official letters' and other genres of writing as well as oral forms of communication.

Three issues are central in this. The first one concerns the choice of media: in the world of the Greek poleis, a world very much based on face-to-face interaction, where decisions were taken in the assembly, the choice between oral and written messages matters, both from a formal point of view and in terms of impact on the audience.⁸ Letters are ideally placed for this kind of questioning: because epistolary communication is very close to oral communication, presenting in written form most of the deictic marks of oral direct discourse, the person of the sender is very markedly present in the epistolary communication. 'The idea of *parousia*, the projection of the official's person, the sense of his felt presence, and the transmission of his authority is fundamental in official letter writing . . . The reiteration and reanimation of the official's authoritative voice authenticated the message and effected the recipients' response.'⁹

A remark of Philostratus concerning the now lost treatise in epistolary form 'How to write letters' by Philostratus of Lemnos, his son-in-law, shows that the ancients were perfectly aware of the illocutionary tendency of letter writing. According to Philostratus, his son-in-law's letter had been written against Aspasius, the *ab epistulis* (secretary) of the emperor (Caracalla or Severus Alexander), who wrote letters in far too complex a style; what follows is Philostratus' perception of the right tone of a royal letter.

αὐτοκράτωρ γὰρ δὴ ὅποτε ἐπιστέλλοι, οὐ δεῖ ἐνθυμημάτων οὐδ' ἐπιχειρημάτων, ἀλλὰ δόξης, οὐδ' αὖ ἁσαφείας, ἐπειδὴ νόμους φθέγγεται, σαφήνεια δὲ ἑρμηνεύς νόμον.
(Philostr. VS II, 628 Kayser)

For an emperor when he writes a letter ought not to use rhetorical syllogisms or trains of reasoning, but ought to express only his own will; nor again should he be obscure, since he gives sound to laws, and lucidity is the interpreter of the law.

The bringing together of the sound of the emperor's voice and of the law it represents in Philostratus' discussion of epistolary writing underlines the performative aspect of imperial utterances.¹⁰ The sound of a Hellenistic king's voice will have

⁷ Bertrand 1985 (developing ideas sketched in Wörrle 1978); Ma 1999; survey of royal letter writing in Virgilio 2011.

⁸ On face-to-face interaction as opposed to mediated communication see Bassi 1998.

⁹ Stirewalt 1993: 5.

¹⁰ Cf. Millar 1992: 637 (and 93 for short discussion of Philostratus' passage); for a survey of the imperial correspondence, see 213–28, as well as Millar 1967.

been very much the same, at least in his intention; but how will it have been heard in the Greek poleis, as compared with the Roman empire? More generally, how was the sound of the epistolary voice marked in the context of the Greek city? Did poleis send letters, did they choose this way to make their voice heard elsewhere?

The second main issue concerns historical context and literary form: how did letter writing evolve in ancient Greece? When was it first perceived as a distinct mode of writing (and was it ever perceived as a genre)? It is generally accepted that until the late fifth or early fourth century in Greece the letter is not codified as such: the extant letters do not show traces of the standard introductory and closing epistolary formulae, but appear to be simply the written version of an oral message, sent by an individual who cannot use his voice. How did the letter reach its standard form, attested from the second part of the fourth century BC, and comprising prescript, *formula valetudinis*, body of the message, and final greeting? As for official letters, was Welles right in his assumption that the official letter to an individual developed out of the private letter, while the official letter to a community was based on the prevailing form of communication between communities, the city decree?

The third issue, obviously linked to the two already raised, concerns ideology: how does official letter writing differ from other forms of official writing or official speech? Does it carry particular ideological connotations? Why did specific individuals or groups choose (or not choose) this means of communication? And what place does it occupy in the Greek polis, especially seeing that it is the preferred means of *royal* long-distance communication? Probably because of the relative scarcity of epistolary documents of the archaic and classical period, letters have played a marginal role, if they have been at all considered, in discussions of the respective roles of orality and literacy in Greek culture and society. These discussions have tended to be confined to the archaic and classical period, on the basis of the assumption that from the fourth century onwards literacy was anyway widespread. That writing was available is undisputed; but was it always chosen? And what kinds of writing (or of speech) were chosen as representative? Types of writing—and types of speech—might have been felt to be linked to specific forms of government and to specific discourses.¹¹

An excellent critical reading of the debate surrounding the use of writing was provided by Rosalind Thomas's *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (1992).¹² The ideological model has by now prevailed over the notion of technological determinism: it is commonly admitted that society determines the uses it will make of writing. The drawing of crude connections between writing and specific forms of government is also generally avoided, and both the thesis that establishes a link between writing and democracy, and its opposite, namely that there exists an essential connection between writing and autocracy, have run their course.¹³

¹¹ Terms such as 'ancient perceptions', 'connotations', or 'representations' of writing and letter writing, as well as (less often) 'discourse' or 'ideology' will appear relatively often in what follows. I take representation to mean the process by which social meaning is transmitted among individuals through literary creations, visual images, and other media; the significance of representation lies in its role in both the perpetuation and contestation of discourses. Discourses enable, reproduce, and diffuse the power relations underlying material reality; ideologies misrepresent these relationships.

¹² See now her reassessment: Thomas 2009.

¹³ See Thomas 1992: 144–7; Hedrick 1999 (with Sickinger 2009); Thomas 2009; and already Musti 1986. Holders of the first view include Meritt 1940; Detienne 1988b; Missiou 2011; the second has been

This is certainly a good thing; but while statements of principle have been relatively numerous, not enough detailed attention has been given to the specific functions of different kinds of writing—and of speech.¹⁴ This is what I shall attempt in the pages that follow.

The book is (somewhat artificially) divided into an introduction, and two main parts: a narrative of beginnings, so far as we can reconstruct them, and as the Greeks saw them; and a contextualization of letter writing in the polis.

After the introduction, which focuses on general aspects of letter writing (ancient and modern definitions of letter writing; conveyance of letters in the ancient world; and analysis of the terminology and its implications), the second chapter discusses the evidence for the beginnings of alphabetic writing and its impact, and more generally the sociology of early writing; the main point is the existence of regional differentiations, something that will be stressed again and again in the book. I then trace, against this background, the development of letter writing as a genre, on the basis of a detailed analysis of the enunciation of the earliest Greek letters (550–350 BC), and of a comparison of these early letters with other communicative forms such as curses. My point is that until the mid-fourth century BC there is no shared, stable epistolary format: letters appear to be the relatively haphazard transcriptions of oral messages.

The third chapter focuses on representations, and in particular on the traditions on the invention of writing and letter writing. These traditions are analysed for what they can tell about the connotations attributed to writing (and specifically to letter writing) by the ancients; whenever possible, I have tried to contextualize these narratives within their chronological horizon. It emerges that writing, throughout the archaic and classical periods, is firmly anchored among human beings (the gods have very little to do with it); and that while letter writing may have been actually used early on for long-distance communication, this—with the notable exception of Bellerophon's letter—finds no reflections in art or literature. When narrating the origins of writing, sixth- and fifth-century Greeks seem to have chosen to see in it a craft imported from the outside—without specifying any use for it—or to have attributed its invention to some epic hero, in which case, the function of writing is usually said to be the preservation of memory and poetic creation. Three divergent accounts exist, however, that see in 'writing' 'epistolary writing'; I shall argue that these accounts are part of a fifth-century debate on the uses of writing, and that in all three cases letter writing is negatively marked. The chapter ends with a look at ancient discussions on the origins of the epistolary greetings, and on its connection with oral greetings.

A study of the letters in the ancient historians (ch. 4) closes this first part, and prepares for the next. The analysis of communication in Herodotus confirms the conclusions of the preceding chapters on the closeness of oral and written message. However, letter-writing characters are in Herodotus marked as oriental

notably upheld by Steiner 1994. Detailed discussion in Pébarthe 2006: 15–30 and, with focus on Athens, Pébarthe 2005; but see Thomas 2010 for a slightly different evaluation.

¹⁴ An early exception: Stoddart and Whitley's (1988) contrastive analysis of literacy in Crete, Attica, and Etruria. On the necessity of a 'qualitative model' see Davies 2005; Liddel 2009; Osborne 2009; Day 2010: 30–1. Also interesting is the focus on 'sacred words' between orality and literacy in Lardinois, Blok, and van der Poel 2011.

or tyrannical, while letter writing itself can be often deceptive. This is no longer the case in Thucydides, although letters still tend to prove dysfunctional when viewed in the context of the polis. The references to letter writing in Xenophon do not present any marked differences from those in Thucydides; things change with Ctesias, to whom the first embedded love-letter is owed, and, in a different way, with Anaximenes. I shall argue that this change reflects a more general change in communicative practices in Greece, a change that we see actualized in Polybius' work, as well as in the epigraphical letters studied in chapter 7.

The second part of the book considers the connotations of letter writing within the polis. The fifth and sixth chapters concern Athens, and look at letter writing through the lens of literary texts; the seventh chapter, based mainly on epigraphical material, looks at the wider Greek world. In the fifth chapter, I analyse the appearances of letters on the Athenian stage, both in drama and in comedy, to tease out the connotations of epistolary writing. Tragedy clearly presents epistolary communication as problematic; while it is difficult to correlate directly the uses of letters in tragedy with those in Athenian political—or everyday—life, a comic fragment of the fourth-century comic poet Antiphanes explicitly contrasts the masculine and public speech of the rhetors with the feminine and private writing of letters. As it happens, in Antiphanes both are marked negatively—that is after all often the point in comedy—yet this contrast is an important one. In the sixth chapter, I pursue the analysis of the contrast between public speech and letter writing, as it plays itself out on the political and forensic scene, through a discussion of the mention of letters in the speeches of the Attic orators; I end with a look at the very first epistolary treatises, and with an attempt at teasing out the reasons for the choice of this extraordinarily successful form, and its implications.

The seventh chapter moves outside Athens and into the Hellenistic period. I first describe the formal contrast (in terms of both structure and terminology) between decree and official letter. The latter is the instrument through which Hellenistic kings communicate their decisions, at all levels; Greek poleis use letters for internal communications, but do not usually inscribe them, and for internal decisions and interstate communication they tend to use decrees. However, some Greek poleis appear to have made use of letters for interstate communication, and some letters by poleis are inscribed by other poleis. Thus, while some Greek cities seem to resist the letter (or at any rate, resist its monumentalization in their landscape), other Greek cities do not have problems with this instrument. Faced with this situation, I advance the hypothesis that the letter, a very personal instrument of communication, may have been more acceptable in those poleis which were accustomed to an oligarchic, personal way of dealing with power. Here, the point about regional differentiation in the uses of writing, made in the first chapter, finds its counterpart.

Three appendices close the book, giving the text and translation of the Greek documentary letters known to date, from the earliest one (c.550 BC) to the mid-fourth century BC; a selection of ancient texts on the invention of writing; and a list of official letters by Greek poleis preserved on stone, as well as a list of the letters sent by Roman magistrates and inscribed on stone, from the earliest attested until 1 BC.

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It is a pleasure to be able to thank the persons and the institutions that have made this book possible. The project began its life in 1999, during my year as fellow at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington; I am grateful to the directors, Debbie Boedeker and Kurt Raaflaub, and to the other fellows (notably Ruth and Victor Caston, Jonathan Hall, Franziska Lang, Astrid Moeller, David Rosenbloom, Hans van Wees, and Victoria Wohl) for the fantastic atmosphere and the intellectual stimulation which enabled me to refine the guiding questions that inform my investigation into Greek epistolography. After my return to L'Aquila University, I had the opportunity of presenting part of my work in Tours, at the second and third conferences '*Epistulae antiquae*. Le Genre épistolaire antique et ses prolongements européens', organized in 2000 and 2002 by Élisabeth Gavoille and Léon Nadjó; the chapter on Antiphanes' Sappho received a first airing there, as did ideas on communication, oral and written, in Greece and the Near East. Maurizio Giangiulio, Mauro Moggi, Mario Lombardo, and Leone Porciani offered welcome feedback on letter writing in Herodotus' *Histories* at the conference 'Erodoto e il modello erodoteo', held in Trento in 2003; Lucio Bertelli, Umberto Bultrighini, and Mario Lombardo helped me define my ideas on the role of letter writing in the polis, on the occasion of the conference on 'Democrazia e anti-democrazia nel mondo greco', held in Chieti in 2003. A most welcome interruption to work on the project occurred in 2004, with the birth of Michael; I cannot adequately express my gratitude to my colleagues at L'Aquila, and especially Professors Franca Ela Consolino, Maria Grossmann, and Maria Carla Giammarco Razzano, for their understanding and support, on that occasion and throughout my time there. These memories are even more precious in the light of the fact that five years later, after I had already left, L'Aquila was devastated by an earthquake, and the lives of all my colleagues—and the life of the city—were changed forever. Part of my maternity leave was spent in Cambridge, in the congenial setting of Clare Hall: this was when the project finally began to take definitive shape (not least because of the superb resources of the University Library), though it was again slowed down by another change of place and circumstances: my move to Durham, in September 2006, meant learning to cope with—as well as function in—an academic world entirely new to me. If I managed to settle into the system with relative ease, it is thanks to the help of my husband, Ingo Gildenhard, and the understanding of my new colleagues. And the system had its rewards: a term of institutional leave combined with a top-up grant from the AHRC allowed me to spend most of the academic year 2008/9 on the manuscript. During this period I had the opportunity of presenting four chapters of the book to audiences in Paris, as a visiting professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, which, fittingly, brought me back in touch with my academic beginnings: I am grateful to Claude Calame not only for his invitation and for the numerous comments he and the other participants made, but also for his constant friendship, and for all that I have learnt from him ever since the years I spent as 'assistante en histoire

ancienne' in Lausanne: his influence, and more generally the Lausanne years, have been decisive in shaping my work.

The first version of the manuscript was finished in 2009, on the shores of the Bodensee, at the University of Konstanz, where I spent the last leg of the AHRC fellowship, at the kind invitation of Professor Ulrich Gotter: as in Cambridge, I benefited from the superb resources and facilities of the University Library, which contributed much to the shape of the first full draft of the book. That this moment of closure was entirely preliminary is due to the incredible luck I had with OUP's anonymous readers: I owe to their careful reading more than I can say. Their comments resulted in a fundamental reworking of the entire manuscript, both at the level of overall organization and innumerable minute details. One concern they raised, which I found impossible to address on my own, was English idiom, and I am therefore very grateful to Dr Leofranc Holford-Strevens for agreeing to proofread the revised draft, which resulted in significant improvements, and not only on the formal level. One is always faced with the tension between care for the details and the overall picture, a tension well encapsulated by Aby Warburg's statement 'Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail'—a reformulation of the old German proverb 'Der Teufel steckt im Detail'. Finding the crucial details is difficult enough as it is; but getting them always right well-nigh impossible. Here help and feedback from colleagues have been vital. I owe much to audiences at Somerville (Oxford) and the University of Toronto (in particular Andreas Bendlin and Martin Revermann) in 2006, when the project was still at an early stage; to the comments by Michele Faraguna, Edward Harris, and Mirko Canevaro on my ideas on letter writing in the orators during the conference 'The Letter: Epistolary Formats in the Ancient World, 3000 BC—AD 53', organized in Rome by Uri Yiftach-Firanko; to the help of my Durham colleagues Ted Kaizer, Andrej Petrovic, P. J. Rhodes, and David Thomas; to discussions with Marcello Carastro, Silvia Milanezi, Claude Mossé, and Pauline Schmitt-Pantel in Paris; to discussions with Manuela Mari on a number of issues, among which notably the Macedonian *diagramma* and letter writing in Polybius; to feedback from Jaime Curbera on the part dealing with *defixiones*; and to conversations with Ulrich Gotter during my time at Lake Constance, especially on the interface of language and power. With great generosity, Madalina Dana shared information on three recently published letters on lead. Last but not least, I am profoundly grateful to my copyeditor, David Pelteret, who invested an enormous amount of time and effort into getting a difficult typescript ready for press.

But I doubt that this book, which I began while on my own, would ever have seen the light of day without the family support I have enjoyed in its later stages: I therefore dedicate this book to Ingo and Michi.

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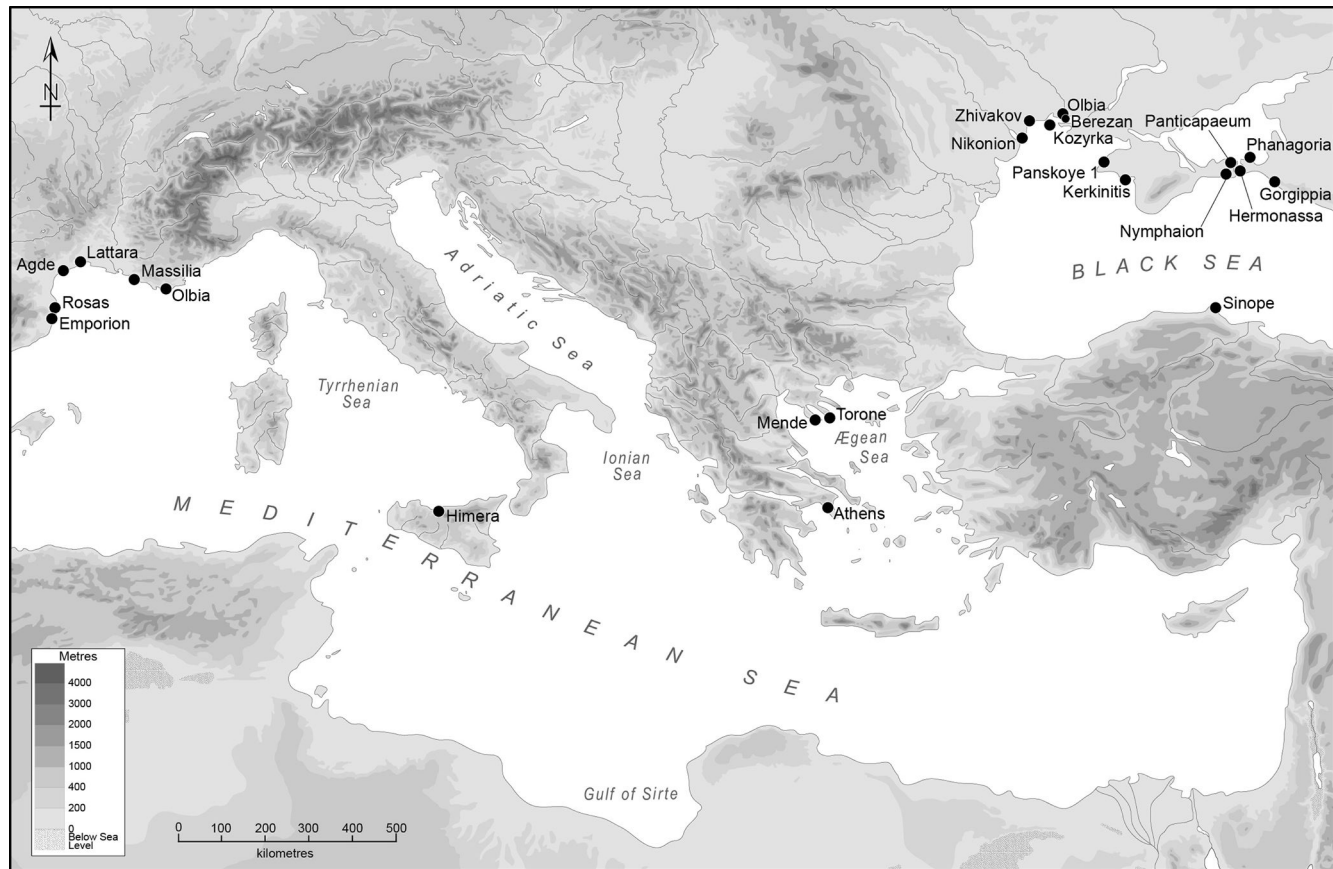
List of Abbreviations

Alberti	I. B. Alberti, <i>Thucydidis Historiae</i> , i–iii (Rome, 1972–2000)
AVI	H. R. Immerwahr and R. Wachter, <i>Attic Vase Inscriptions</i> < http://avi.unibas.ch/home.html >
ARV ²	J. D. Beazley, <i>Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters</i> , 2nd edn (Oxford, 1963)
BE	J. and L. Robert et al., <i>Bulletin Épigraphique</i> (in <i>Revue des Études Grecques</i> , 1938–)
Bernabé	A. Bernabé, <i>Poetae epici Graeci: Testimonia et fragmenta</i> , i–ii (Leipzig and Berlin, 1988–2007)
BGU	<i>Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlich (later Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden</i> (Berlin, 1895–)
BNJ	I. Worthington (ed.), <i>Brill's New Jacoby: Online</i> (Leiden, 2007–) < http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby >
Campbell	D. A. Campbell (ed. and trans.), <i>Greek Lyric</i> , i–v (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1982–93)
CEG	P. A. Hansen (ed.), <i>Carmina epigraphica Graeca</i> , i: <i>Saeculorum VIII–V a. Chr. n.</i> (Berlin, 1983)
CEL	P. Cugusi (ed.), <i>Corpus Epistularum Latinarum Papyris Tabulis Ostracis servatarum</i> , i: <i>Textus</i> ; ii: <i>Commentarius</i> (Florence, 1992)
CID	F. Lefèvre (ed.), <i>Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes</i> , iv: <i>Documents amphictioniques</i> (Paris, 2002)
CIRB	<i>Corpus inscriptionum regni Bosporani</i> (Moscow and Leningrad, 1965)
CVA	<i>Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum</i>
D.–K.	H. Diehls and W. Kranz (eds.), <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , 6th edn (Berlin, 1952)
DNP	H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), <i>Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> , 16 vols. (Stuttgart, 1996–2003)
DT	<i>Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt tam in Graecis Orientis quam in totius Occidentis partibus praeter Atticas</i> , collegit, digessit, commentario instruxit . . . A. Audollent (Paris, 1904)
DTA	R. Wünsch (ed.), ‘Defixionum tabellae Atticae’, in <i>Inscriptiones Atticae aetatis Romanae</i> , iii: <i>Appendix</i> (Berlin, 1897)
EBGR	A. Chaniotis (ed.), <i>Epigraphical Bulletin for Greek Religion</i> , published in <i>Kernos</i> , 1991–
ETCSL	J. A. Black, G. Cunningham, J. Ebeling, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson, J. Taylor, and G. Zólyomi, <i>The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature</i> (Oxford, 1998–2006) < http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/ >
Fouilles de Delphes III	É. Bourguet, G. Colin, [et al.], <i>Fouilles de Delphes</i> , III: <i>Épigraphie</i> , i–vi (Paris, 1909–76)
FGrH	F. Jacoby (ed.), <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin and Leiden, 1923–58)

- FGrHCont G. Schepens (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker Continued* (Leiden, 1998–)
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- Hude C. Hude (ed.), *Herodoti Historiae*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1927)
- IC M. Guarducci (ed.), *Inscriptiones Creticae*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1935–50)
- I. Cos M. Segre, *Iscrizioni di Cos* (Rome, 2004)
- I. Délos iv P. Roussel and M. Launey (eds.), *Inscriptions de Délos*, iv: *Décrets postérieurs à 166 av. J.-C. (Nos. 1497–1524); dédicaces postérieures à 166 av. J.-C. (Nos. 1525–2219)* (Paris, 1937)
- IG *Inscriptiones Graecae* (Berlin, 1913–)
- I. Gonnoi B. Helly (ed.), *Gonnoi*, ii: *Les Inscriptions* (Amsterdam, 1973)
- I. Iasos W. Blümel (ed.), *Die Inschriften von Iasos*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1985)
- I. Labraunda J. Crampa (ed.), *Labraunda* iii, *The Greek inscriptions*, 1–2 (Lund, 1969–72)
- I. Lampsakos P. Frisch (ed.), *Die Inschriften von Lampsakos* (Bonn, 1978)
- I. Magnesia O. Kern (ed.), *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Mäander* (Berlin, 1900)
- IPArk G. Thür and H. Taeuber, *Prozessrechtliche Inschriften der griechischen Poleis: Arkadien*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 607 (Vienna, 1994)
- I.v.Olympia W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, *Die Inschriften von Olympia* (Berlin, 1896)
- K.–A. R. Kassel and C. Austin (eds.), *Poetae comici Graeci* (Berlin and New York, 1983–)
- Kannicht R. Kannicht (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*, 2: *Fragmente ohne Autor, zusätzliche Fragmente und Indizes zu Band 1* (Göttingen, 1981); *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*, 5. i–ii: *Euripides* (Göttingen, 2004)
- LCS A. D. Trendall, *The Red-Figured Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily* (Oxford, 1967)
- Legrand Ph.-E. Legrand (ed. and trans.), *Hérodote: Histoires*, 11 vols. (Paris, 1932–54)
- LGPN P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (eds.), *A Lexicon of Greek personal names* (Oxford 1987–)
- LIMC *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, 8 vols.; *Indices*, 2 vols; *Supplements*, 2 vols. (Zurich, 1981–2009)
- LSAM F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1955)
- LSJ H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, and R. Mackenzie, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th edn (Oxford, 1925–40); Suppl. by A. E. Barber et al. (Oxford, 1968)
- Masson, ICS O. Masson, *Les Inscriptions chypriotes syllabiques*, 2nd edn, with addenda (Paris, 1983)
- McCabe D. F. McCabe, 'The Princeton Project on the Inscriptions of Anatolia', Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (1991), Packard Humanities Institute CD #7, 1996, now consultable at <<http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/>>

<i>Milet</i> i 3	A. Rehm (ed.), <i>Die Inschriften</i> , in <i>Milet. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899</i> , vol. iii, <i>Das Delphinion in Milet</i> (Berlin, 1914)
M.–L.	R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, <i>A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC</i> (Oxford, 1969)
M.–W.	R. Merkelbach and M. L. West (eds.), <i>Fragmenta Hesiodica</i> (Oxford, 1967)
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 3rd edn (Oxford, 2011–), published online at < http://www.oed.com >
Pack ²	R. A. Pack, <i>The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt</i> , 2nd edn (Ann Arbor, MI, 1965)
P.Bon.	O. Montevecchi (ed.), <i>Papyri Bononienses</i> (Milan, 1953)
P.Cair.Zen. 3	C. C. Edgar (ed.), <i>Zenon Papyri, Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire</i> , iii (Cairo, 1928)
Pf.	R. Pfeiffer (ed.), <i>Callimachus</i> , i: <i>Fragmenta</i> (Oxford, 1949)
P.Hal.	The Graeca Halensis (ed.), <i>Dikaionmata: Auszüge aus alexandrinischen Gesetzen und Verordnungen in einem Papyrus des Philologischen Seminars der Universität Halle (Pap. Hal. 1) mit einem Anhang weiterer Papyri derselben Sammlung</i> (Berlin, 1913)
P.Hib.	B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt (eds.), <i>The Hibeh Papyri</i> , I (London, 1906)
P.Lond.Lit.	H. J. M. Milne (ed.), <i>Catalogue of the Literary Papyri in the British Museum</i> (London, 1927)
<i>PMG</i>	D. L. Page (ed.), <i>Poetae melici Graeci</i> (Oxford, 1962)
P.Oxy.	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , Published by the Egypt Exploration Society (London, 1898–)
P.Paris	J. A. Letronne, W. Brunet de Presle, and E. Egger (eds.), <i>Notices et textes des papyrus du Musée du Louvre et de la Bibliothèque Impériale</i> (Paris, 1865) (Papyri nos. 1–71 republished in <i>UPZ</i>)
Radt	S. Radt (ed.), <i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> 3: <i>Aeschylus</i> (Göttingen, 1985; 2nd edn, 2008); <i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> 4: <i>Sophocles</i> (Göttingen, 1977; 2nd edn, 1999)
<i>RC</i>	C. B. Welles, <i>Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: A Study in Greek Epigraphy</i> (New Haven, 1934)
<i>RE</i>	A. Pauly, G. Wissowa et al., <i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Stuttgart, 1894–1978)
Rose	V. Rose (ed.), <i>Aristotelis qui ferebantur librorum fragmenta</i> (Leipzig, 1886)
<i>RVP</i>	A. D. Trendall, <i>The Red-Figured Vases of Paestum</i> (Rome, 1987)
<i>RVAp</i>	A. D. Trendall and A. Cambitoglou, <i>The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia</i> , 3 vols. (Oxford, 1978–82)
<i>SB</i>	<i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten</i> (Strassburg, etc., 1915–)
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum</i> , 1– (Leiden and Amsterdam, 1923–)

- SGD D. R. Jordan, 'A Survey of Greek Defixiones not included in the Special Corpora', *GRBS* 26 (1985), 151–97
- S.-M. B. Snell and H. Maehler (eds.), *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, 8th edn (Leipzig, 1987)
- Syll*³ W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd edn, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1915–24)
- Tod M. N. Tod, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, ii: *From 403 to 323 B.C.* (Oxford, 1948)
- TRS H. de Genouillac, *Textes religieux sumériens du Louvre*, i–ii (Paris, 1930)
- UPZ U. Wilcken (ed.), *Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit (ältere Funde)*, i: *Papyri aus Unterägypten* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927) (nos. 1–150); ii: *Papyri aus Oberägypten* (Berlin, 1935–7) (nos. 151–229)
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Map. Findspots of letters, c. 550 BC to c. 350 BC, on lead and ceramic.
 Olbia, 7 letters; Berezan, 2; Panticapaeum, 2; Hermonassa, 2; Emporion, 3; Rosas, 2; Attica, 8; all other places, one letter each.

Ancient Greek Letters

An Introduction

Δρόμων Ζήνωνι χαίρειν. τοῖς θεοῖς πᾶσιν χάριν ἔχομεν, εἰ αὐτός τε ὑγιαίνει
καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ σοι κατὰ λόγον γέγονεν. ἑρρώμεθα δὲ καὶ αὐτός, καὶ καθότι μοι
ἔγραψας τὴν πᾶσαν ἐπιμέλειαν ποιοῦμαι ὅπως ἂν μηθεὶς ἐνοχλῇ τοὺς παρὰ
σοῦ. ὥς δ' ἂν ἀναπλέης ὑγιαίνων, σύνταξόν τιτι τῶν παρὰ σοῦ ἀγοράσαι
μέλιτος Ἀττικοῦ κοτύλην: χρεῖαν γὰρ ἔχω πρὸς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς κατὰ
πρόσταγμα τοῦ θεοῦ. εὐτύχει.

verso: Ζήνωνι

Dromon to Zenon, greetings. I give thanks to all the gods if you are in good health yourself and everything else has been satisfactory. I too am well, and in accordance with what you wrote to me I am taking the utmost care that no one troubles your people. When you are ready to sail up in good health, order one of your people to buy a cotyla of Attic honey; for I require it for my eyes by order of the god. Farewell.

verso: To Zenon.

The above is one of the many letters the sands of Egypt have preserved. It was sent around 260–250 BC by a certain Dromon to Zenon, the private agent of Apollonius, the *dioiketes* (financial minister) of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.¹ The addressee's name, inscribed on the verso of the papyrus sheet, appeared on the outer part of the roll; inside was the text, opening with a standardized greeting, the so-called epistolary prescript, giving the names of sender and addressee (ὁ δεινὸς τῷ δείνῃ χαίρειν—the order of sender and addressee might vary depending on their social importance and on the type of letter), followed by an inquiry about health, itself a very frequent feature in the opening of letters, then by the request (the 'body of the letter'), and by a *formula valedicendi* (here εὐτύχει, but ἑρρωσο is also very frequent). This letter may be taken as representative of the basic format of the ancient letter, a format which, in its main lines, did not change in the long period from the end of the fourth century BC to the close of antiquity.² But letters could

¹ P.Cair.Zen. 3. 59426 (SB 3. 6804); the translation given here follows closely that of Hunt and Edgar 1932: 273–4, no. 91.

² Overview in Klauck 2006: 17–25. The conventional formulae used for opening and closing the letter, for inquiries about health, etc. are laid out in Exler 1923, based on evidence from papyri dating from c.300 BC to c.300 AD; see also Thraede 1970; White 1981–2; Tite 2010 on prescripts; Martin 2010

(and can) take fairly different shapes, depending on the occasion and purpose for which they were (and are) written. I shall thus begin with an overview of the various types of letters that can be grouped under the umbrella appellation of 'Greek epistolography'; this part will close on a modern definition of the letter. From there, I shall move to conveyance: because of the obvious impact exercised by the sociological, economic, and political contexts, it is important to look at the modalities of the transmission of letters (and more generally of information) in ancient Greece. A discussion of the ancient terminology for 'letter' will close this chapter.

1.1. SKETCHING A TYPOLOGY

Sending a letter or a trusted messenger is, in a world lacking telephone or internet, the only means of ensuring private communication between persons or groups who cannot communicate directly. As Cicero puts it, there are 'many types of letters, but one thing is certain, that the thing itself was invented so that we could inform those absent of anything that it might be important for them to know either concerning ourselves or themselves'.³ Communication is thus foremost; and yet, just as he underlines the primary communicative function of the letters, Cicero recognizes that there are many types of letters. Beyond the transmission of information, letters were used to create and maintain a social network of relationships, as well as to entertain and amuse. Sending a letter rather than an oral message meant moreover that the content of the exchange could be preserved and stored in an archive. All this explains the importance of letters: writing and reading letters was a central part of daily life in the ancient world. This applied to monarchs, as is shown by the celebrated saying attributed to Seleucus, that 'if people only realized what a great task it was just to read and write so many letters, they would not even pick up a diadem that had been discarded' (Plut. *Mor.* 790 AB); but from the Hellenistic period onwards, this was true of all levels of society.⁴

It is thus not surprising to find that the ancients did reflect on this activity. No systematic ancient treatment of letter writing as a genre has survived, but, besides occasional reflections in the letters of masters of the genre, there are extant some theoretically oriented discussions of letter writing in the context of larger works, as well as manuals for the instruction of would-be letter writers.⁵

on the 'body'. This letter has actually one rather exceptional feature, in that it presents also, in addition to the inquiry about health, a 'thanksgiving formula' (examples and discussion in Collins 2010).

³ Cic. *fam.* 2. 4. 1 (to Curio): *Epistularum genera multa esse non ignoras, sed unum illum certissimum, cuius causa inventa res ipsa est, ut certiores faceremus absentis, si quid esset, quod eos scire aut nostra aut ipsorum interesset.* Compare Cic. *Q. fr.* 1. 1. 37.

⁴ Diffusion at all levels: Trapp 2003: 34. On late antique epistolary networks, and on the characteristics of late antique letter collections (letters as 'calling cards', or to create an image of the writer and his network: the really important parts were transmitted orally, by a trusted messenger), see the essays of Bradbury 2004 (Libanius), Salzman 2004 (Symmachus), Liebeschütz 2004 (Ambrose); on the re-routing of such aristocratic networks into episcopal correspondence, Sotinel 2004.

⁵ See Koskenniemi 1956: 18–21; Cugusi 1983: 43; Malherbe 1988; Trapp 2003: 42–6; Klauck 2006: 183–8; Poster 2007 is also useful, but marred by a number of slips.

The earliest sustained reflection on letter writing is found in chapters 223–35 of Demetrius' *De elocutione* (*On Style*), a work probably composed around the middle of the second century BC.⁶ Among other things, Demetrius is responsible for citing the earliest formulation of what became a rather trite (as well as inexact) commonplace: at the beginning of his discussion of the epistolary style (*ἐπιστολικὸς χαρακτήρ*), he refers to one Artemon (known as the editor of the letters of Aristotle, an activity confirmed by two late sources) for the opinion that one must write dialogues and letters in the same style; for a letter is 'the one part of a dialogue' (*εἶναι γὰρ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν οἷον τὸ ἕτερον μέρος τοῦ διαλόγου*).⁷ The notion that a letter is a *homilia*, a meeting in conversation of two persons, will remain central to letter writers throughout antiquity and beyond; famously Cicero said that the letter is 'a [private] conversation between absent friends', *amicorum conloquia absentium* (*Phil.* 2. 7). To the notion of interaction with friends through epistolary conversation (*homilia*) is linked that of the *parousia*, the presence of the correspondent, felt at the moment of reading, but also at the moment of writing a letter: in quite a few instances the writer says that the very act of writing brought to her/his eyes the image of the addressee.⁸ Demetrius admits that there is some truth in this statement, but then proceeds to take issue with it, on the grounds that a dialogue imitates oral improvisation, while a letter is written and sent as if it were a gift, that is to say, requires elaboration of a different type. To show what kind of writing should not be used in letters, Demetrius proceeds to cite a fairly elevated passage from a letter of Aristotle to the Macedonian general Antipater, concluding that this resembles more a declamation (*epideixis*) than plain, light conversation.⁹ There must be some irony going on here, as Demetrius uses for his refutation of Artemon's theory a letter of Aristotle, whose correspondence had been edited by Artemon himself. The rhetorician then adds that, because of its written character, a letter should not be full of interruptions, of breaks in sentences, and in general should not be mimetic.¹⁰ This emphasis on writtenness is extremely interesting in the light of the overlap (terminological, but also practical, as we shall see) between

⁶ Text and translation in Malherbe 1988; text, translation and commentary in Trapp 2003: 180–2. Translation and discussion: Klauck 2006: 184–8. Date: Trapp 2003: 43. Larger discussion, including the later theoreticians: Koskeniemi 1956: 21–53.

⁷ Demetr. *Eloc.* 223, with Trapp 2003: 317–19. On the identity of Artemon, also Koskeniemi 1956: 24–6.

⁸ The *graphe* is thus the image of the correspondent. Cf. the scene of letter reading in Plautus' *Pseudolus*, esp. 35–6, 63–4, with Jenkins 2005: 364–9; Turpilii fr. 1 *inc. fab.* Rychlewska (= Jer. *Ep.* 8. 1, discussed below, 250: *sola res est, quae homines absentes praesentes faciat*); Cic. *Fam.* 15. 16. 1, *Fam.* 2. 9. 2; instances of sexual closeness brought about by letter reading: Hodkinson forthcoming; see Koskeniemi 1956: 172–80 for instances in letters from papyri; Klauck 2006: 191–2. In the final verses of the poem by H. Barbusse 'La Lettre' (from *Pleureuses* (Paris, 1895)), writer and addressee become confused in the mind of the writer: 'Et mi-révant, je ne sais guère | Si c'est moi qui t'écris, ou toi...'.

⁹ Demetr. *Eloc.* 225: ὁ γὰρ οὕτως διαλεγόμενος ἐπιδεικνυμένῳ ἔοικεν μάλλον, οὐ λαλοῦντι. The key terms here are the verbs ἐπιδείκνυμι and λαλέω: the first refers to the practice of giving *epideixis*, public presentations, while the second indicates everyday, light conversation. *Λαλέω* appears, however, in riddles on writing (below), and marks feminine epistolary language, in contrast to male public speech, in a fragment of a fourth-century comedy, Antiphanes' *Sappho* (below, 245 and 254–6).

¹⁰ ἢ γὰρ τοιαύτη πᾶσα ἐρμηνεία καὶ μίμησις ὑποκριτῇ πρέπει μάλλον, οὐ γραφομένης ἐπιστολαῖς, 'All such imitative style is fitting for an actor, but not for communications couched in writing' (Demetr. *Eloc.* 226).

oral and written message; Demetrius is clearly driven by his agenda (fixing generic boundaries) and by the importance that writing by his time has acquired in everyday life. Remarkably, it is at this point that Demetrius, marking a slight retreat from the position first assumed, provides us with the second best-known commonplace of epistolary communication, the letter as a mirror of the soul:

Πλείστον δὲ ἐχέτω τὸ ἡθικὸν ἢ ἐπιστολή, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ διάλογος· σχεδὸν γὰρ εἰκόνα ἑκάστος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς γράφει τὴν ἐπιστολήν. καὶ ἔστι μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἄλλου λόγου παντὸς ἰδεῖν τὸ ἦθος τοῦ γράφοντος, ἐξ οὐδενὸς δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἐπιστολῆς. (Demetr. *Eloc.* 227)

The letter, like the dialogue, should be strong on characterization; for a person writes a letter almost drawing an image of his own soul. In every other form of composition it is possible to discern the writer's character, but in none so clearly as in the letter.¹¹

This is, again, an exquisitely literary worry that does not find any obvious reflection in most of the letters we shall be looking at; but it explains the abundant use made of letters in the novel and in epistolary romances. The remaining paragraphs of *On Style* dedicated to letter writing are more oriented towards practical aspects, such as length (to be avoided), structure (relatively free), choice of topic (not all topics fit the format of a letter), type and tone of argumentation (friendly, and making use of proverbs, i.e. of a common, shared property, and popular as well). All this leads Demetrius to the conclusion that letters should be written in a mixed style, a combination of the elegant and the plain. For this ancient rhetorician, the letter is thus, up to a point, a conversation in writing, but distinguished by a set of relatively fixed rules. Interestingly, the last example Demetrius cites in his discussion of the style in which letters should be written is that of a letter addressed to a polis or a king: here, a more elevated style might be in order (*Eloc.* 234).

At any rate: if the Artemon mentioned by Demetrius is indeed the editor of Aristotle's correspondence, then a reflection on letters had begun already at the turn of the fourth century BC; the very fact of editing a letter collection implies a recognition that these documents are of interest as letters. If we can trust Lucian, the interest in collecting and editing letters was not limited to philosophical schools: the grammarian Dionysodorus of Troezen, a student of Aristarchus and active in Alexandria in the second half of the second century BC, is said to have edited the letters of Ptolemy I, and he too might have prefaced his collection with some comments on the appropriate style.¹² But for us, Demetrius' treatise is the earliest text giving a sense of how letter writing was perceived.

The main characteristics of the letter, and consequently the set of appropriate rules fixed by Demetrius, remained much the same throughout antiquity: the other ancient discussions of the theory of letter writing (the chapter 27 of Iulius Victor's *Ars Rhetorica*, dated to the fourth century AD, and the section *de epistulis*

¹¹ Koskenniemi 1956: 40–1 and 175–80, with references to a number of similar passages that show the diffusion of this topos; Trapp 2003: 39–40.

¹² Interestingly, Lucian mentions the edition because Ptolemy in one of his letters allegedly inverted the normal order, greeting Seleucus with 'Health', and closing the letter with 'Rejoice' (χαίρειν): Καὶ Πτολεμαῖος δὲ ὁ Λάγου Σελεύκῳ ἐπιστέλλων σαφῶς ἀνέστρεψε τὴν τάξιν ἐν ἀρχῇ μὲν τῆς ἐπιστολῆς ὑγαίνειν αὐτὸν προσιπῶν, ἐπὶ τέλει δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐρρῶσθαι ὑπογράψας τὸ χαίρειν, ὡς Διονυσόδωρος ὁ τὰς ἐπιστολὰς αὐτοῦ συναγαγὼν φησιν (Luc. *Laps.* 10).

of the *excerpta rhetorica* published by Halm) follow very much in Demetrius' footsteps.¹³

Besides theoretically oriented works, manuals on letter writing also circulated. Two of them have survived: the *Τύποι ἐπιστολικοί* (*Epistolary Types*) of Pseudo-Demetrius, a work of uncertain date (proposals range from the second century BC to the third century AD); and another manual preserved in two versions, one, referred to with *περὶ ἐπιστολμαίου χαρακτήρος* (*On the Epistolary Style*), attributed to Proclus and going back probably to the fourth century AD, the other, bearing the title *Ἐπιστολμαῖοι χαρακτήρες* (*Epistolary Styles*), attributed to Libanius and dated to the mid-fifth century AD.¹⁴ Two lucky papyrological finds show that many more manuals of this kind must have existed.¹⁵ The manuals attributed to Demetrius and Proclus/Libanius are very basic, offering the novice writer examples of types of letter (the first lists twenty-one examples, the second expand the range to forty-one, but of course the categories often overlap), to be chosen according to the occasion. These manuals, while not discussing epistolary writing and its connotations, offer interesting, although at times contradictory, insights into letter writing and its uses.

The opening of [Demetrius'] *Epistolary Types* seems to imply that the manual is addressed mainly to persons working in the public administration, who would have used the various examples of letters as 'primers':

Since according to the theory that governs epistolary types, Heraclides, letters may be composed in a great number of styles, but are written in those which always fit the particular circumstance, and since letters ought to be written as skilfully as possible, but as it happens are written indifferently by those who undertake such services for men in public office, I . . . have sketched a sample of the arrangement of each kind . . . 1. The friendly type is the one which seems to be written by a friend to a friend. For frequently those in a prominent position are expected by some to write in a friendly manner to their inferiors and to others who are their equals, for example to military commanders, viceroys, and governors. There are times, indeed, when they write to them without knowing them personally.¹⁶

¹³ Text and translation of Julius Victor's chapters on epistolarity in Malherbe 1988: 62–4; text, translation, and commentary in Trapp 2003: 184–8. Discussion: Koskenniemi 1956: 27–33, 44–5. Note also the *De Epistulis* by Philostratus of Lemnus (II 257, 29–258, 28 Kayser) and Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 51 (text and translation in Malherbe 1988, resp. 42–3 and 58–61), with Poster 2007: 32–4.

¹⁴ Text and translation in Malherbe 1988: 30–41 and 66–81 respectively; French translation with commentary: Malosse 2004. See also Koskenniemi 1956: 54–7; Trapp 2003: 44–6; Klauck 2006: 202–4.

¹⁵ Koskenniemi 1956: 57–9. The first text, P.Paris. 63, a collection of copies of everyday letters (dated to 164/163 BC), clearly intended for schools, was published by Wilcken in *UPZ* 1. 110, 144, 145, and 111; interestingly, while 110 and 111 seem to be copies of 'real' letters, 144 and 145 might be rhetorical exercises in the form of letters. The second text, P.Bon. 5, is a very late (third or fourth century AD) primer for the writing of Greek and Latin letters, containing in two columns fragments of approximately ten types of letters: text and translation in Malherbe 1988: 44–57, and now also in Cugusi, *CEL* i, 1. Discussion of both documents in Klauck 2006: 204–5.

¹⁶ Cf. Malherbe 1988: 30–2. The following are the twenty-one types identified in [Demetrius'] proem: φιλικός, συστατικός, μεμπτικός, δνειδιστικός, παραμυθητικός, επιτιμητικός, νουθετητικός, ἀπειλητικός, ψεκτικός, ἐπαινετικός, συμβουλευτικός, ἀξιωματικός, ἐρωτηματικός, ἀποφαντικός, ἀλληγορικός, αἰτιολογικός, κατηγορικός, ἀπολογητικός, συγχαρητικός, εἰρωνικός, ἀπευχαριστικός (cf. Klauck 2006: 194–202).

This programmatic statement is, however, not followed up in the rest of the treatise. While in his opening and in the first example of a letter the author of the *Epistolary Types* seems to imagine a context in which the problems and situations to be addressed are those typical of the official letter, the definitions and the examples of letter types actually given in the treatise are relatively restricted and essentially of private character (friendly letter, blame letter, commendatory letter, suitable, as pointed out by Welles, mainly for correspondence between members of the same level of a bureaucracy);¹⁷ yet practical, everyday letters concerning economic exchanges or invitations, that is, types of letters we know were very much used, are missing too. Also completely unmentioned are standard parts of a letter such as the prescript and the closing greeting: these are evidently taken for granted. More disturbing is the fact that the definition of the type sometimes clashes with the example, as is the case of the friendly letter (no. 1), supposedly an instrument to be used by those in superior positions to obtain prompt acquiescence, but presenting in the example a case of lifelong friendship between sender and addressee.

It is at any rate clear that for the ancient theorists, the genre ‘letter’ encompassed writings of various types, and that it was important to follow the rules specific to each. As we saw, Demetrius had specified that letters written to cities or kings should be composed in a more elevated tone than those written for private use, but had also highlighted as bad instances of this practice, because veering towards the treatise, the letters addressed by Aristotle to Alexander and by Plato to the relatives and friends of Dion.¹⁸ Cicero in his *Familiares* sets out a clear distinction between letters written for private use and letters written for a wider public, *aliter . . . scribimus quod eos solos quibus mittimus, aliter quod multos lecturos putamus* (Cic. *fam.* 15. 21. 4).¹⁹

However, if there is a clear sense that there are rules, these rules are not really made explicit, nor do the definitions offered include any analysis of the formal structure of a letter. Rules and formal structure must thus be deduced from the actual instances of letters. Even a cursory glance at the epistolary material from antiquity is enough to show that a wide number of fairly different types of letters are attested which do not really fit the categories of the ancient manuals. This disparate material may be organized in three main groups: personal (or private, or documentary) letters, having a specific, practical purpose; literary letters (a category covering a remarkably wide range, from philosophical treatises to

¹⁷ Welles 1934: xlii; Welles explained the noticeable absence of what he called the ‘letter-decree’ with the hypothesis that the treatise might come from Egypt (on the Egyptian origin of the *Typoi* see also Klauck 2006: 195). Cf. Koskeniemi 1956: 47–51, 61–2; discussion below, ch. 7.

¹⁸ *Eloc.* 234: ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ πόλεσιν ποτε καὶ βασιλεῦσιν γράφομεν, ἔστωσαν τοιαῦται [αἱ] ἐπιστολαὶ μικρὸν ἐξηρμέναι πῶς. στοχαστέον γὰρ καὶ τοῦ προσώπου ᾧ γράφεται· ἐξηρμένη μέντοι [καὶ] οὐχ ὥστε σύγγραμμα εἶναι ἀντ’ ἐπιστολῆς, ὥσπερ αἱ Ἀριστοτέλους πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Δίωνος οἰκέλους ἢ Πλάτωνος. Interestingly, this is the only reference to official letters in the whole part of the *De elocutione* concerning letters; the rest seems to concern mostly private correspondence.

¹⁹ Ancient texts mentioning the distinction between public and private letters, and the criteria according to which this distinction should operate, are collected in Cugusi 1983: 30–41. Interestingly, public letters are dealt with in two pages. The rest all concern private letters: these are the letters said to be similar to a dialogue, close to a *sermo*, mirror of the soul, etc.

encomia to apologies to fictive letters, including those embedded in longer narrative works); and official (or diplomatic, royal, imperial) letters.²⁰

However, this seemingly neat distinction hides a much more complex reality.²¹ There are some truly personal, 'private' letters, such as those preserved on papyrus or on lead, that owe their survival to chance. But many of these personal letters dealt with economic affairs, and would have been archived as records of transactions: we are already out of the purely personal. Similarly, the 'private' correspondence of famous individuals also presents problems from the point of view of categorization, as it is open to the suspicion of having been kept for publication, by these same individuals or by someone else, because of its more general interest.

'Literary' letters present other types of problems. How does one define the degree of 'literariness' of a letter? Fictional letters in a work of fiction will be literary letters; but what of real letters embedded in a fictional context, and what of letters written with diffusion and possibly publication in mind? The format of the letter could be used for different kinds of public communications: open letters with a propagandistic goal, letters with a philosophic or moral character, dedicatory letters, consolatory letters, treatises, encomia, pamphlets and apologies in the form of a letter, and so on. Then, there are forged letters, attributed to famous historical or mythological characters: fascinating texts, documenting a remarkable attention towards epistolary writing, as well as its importance as a genre. These were never meant as real letters; yet they play, in a greater or lesser measure, on the illusion of a rupture of the epistolary privacy to attract the intended audience, to give the readers the voyeuristic impression of intruding upon private affairs.²²

Official letters might seem less difficult to categorize; but here too, strict divisions are hard to trace. In the case of the correspondence of emperors, for instance, the distinction between personal and official correspondence is often blurred: the official letters were addressed to administrators, proconsuls, or provincial governors, most of whom were personally known to the emperor, or to cities and associations, which would have sought to be represented in Rome by a friend of the emperor.²³ The same applies to the relationship between the Greek cities and the Hellenistic kings: whenever possible, the cities tried to secure the mediation of a *φίλος*, a 'friend' of the king, that is, they tried to combine the official request with a personal note. Moreover, the socio-political and cultural context would exert an influence on the letters themselves, modifying or shaping their message. A simple administrative letter, whose primary function seems to be

²⁰ Sykutris 1931. See also Reed 1997 (with discussion of the connections between epistolary and rhetorical practices); Schmidt 1997 (who divides into eight types: edicts (comparable to laws); official correspondence; open letters, similar to speeches; private letters between individuals; didactic (literary) letters; literary public letters, poetic or in prose; pseudepigraphic letters, aiming at fictional rhetorical prosopoeia; and dedicatory letters); Görgemanns 1997a and 1997b; Klauck 2006: 67–70. Nicolai (2004: 118–20) proposes a division into four groups: practical messages; epistles combining a political message and an elaborate literary form; fictive letters, embedded in all sort of literary works; and letters composed as exercises in schools of rhetoric, devoid of any practical use.

²¹ Sykutris 1931: 186–8; Trapp 2003: 3–5, who concludes: 'The letter, then, is clearly a diverse form of writing . . . but mapping the diversity, and fixing labels on its constituents, is interestingly problematic'; Gibson and Morrison 2007.

²² Rosenmeyer 2001: 198.

²³ Millar 1992: 215. The letters of Pliny in book 10 are another case in point.

that of solving a problem, transmitting a message, or imposing a decision, may also, when monumentalized through its inscription on stone, fulfil propagandistic purposes in favour of the authority from whom it emanated, or of the authority that ordered its inscription; sometimes this last function may become the most important one.²⁴

Thus, it is best to avoid trying to impose excessively neat distinctions among the various types of letters; on the contrary, accepting that there was fluidity between the various sorts of letter is important to understand what were the really important elements, those always present.²⁵ In fact, the very overlap pointed out in the discussion of [Demetrius'] *Epistolary Types*, where the first type of letter is qualified as friendly (and the example indeed presents a case of lifelong friendship between sender and addressee), while its aim is to obtain prompt acquiescence from subordinates, explains the significance of the choice of a letter for communication: the letter aims at persuasion through argument, yes, but mainly through relationship. As Poster puts it, 'the letter functions performatively to establish the friendly relationship it proclaims';²⁶ this explains also the use of generalized and formulaic expressions of friendship within the letter. Far from being trite formulae, they accomplish an important purpose, that of establishing a relationship, within which the request or information conveyed is then framed.

1.2. A MODERN DEFINITION

After looking at ancient definitions, and attempting an empirical organization of the material, we need to offer a modern definition that we can then map onto the field of ancient epistolary writing.²⁷ This is not meant to be a watertight definition: Gibson and Morrison have argued convincingly for the impossibility (and indeed, the futility) of such an attempt.²⁸ Rather, my point of departure is the question with which they close their essay, namely, what the definition of a letter is supposed to accomplish. Whether ultimately any given text is to be categorized as 'letter' or as 'poetic epistle' or 'epistolary treatise' is not a central issue; what is important is to be clear on the markers that give some texts a 'family resemblance', that make them 'epistolary' in character, and at times 'letters' *stricto sensu*; and

²⁴ A point stressed by Funck 1996 (see also Ma 1999: 141 on the effect of recording on stone all the steps in the transmission of the Seleucid administrative correspondence). The letter with which Themistocles invites the Ionians to rebellion (Hdt. 8. 22, discussed below, 116–17) is a good example of a text whose efficacy does not depend on the kind of message transmitted and on its acceptance by the intended audience. Incidentally, very often there is more than one intended audience.

²⁵ Rosenmeyer (2001: 5–11) offers a useful critical discussion of twentieth-century attempts at classifying epistolary genres; I would, however, disagree with her conclusion that 'letter-writing is inherently fictional' (11). Her definition dilutes the meaning of 'fictional': letter writing is inherently fictional in the same way as any communicative act (including face-to-face speech) is 'inherently fictional': we present ourselves to the other.

²⁶ Poster 2007: 26–7.

²⁷ i.e. after having looked at emic definitions (we shall presently also have a look at ancient Greek terminology), we move to an etic definition.

²⁸ Gibson and Morrison 2007 (esp. 15).

even more, to be clear on what this resemblance, this sense of epistolarity, does to the texts themselves, how it inflects their meaning and their perception by the recipient.

The following definition best encapsulates what I am looking for: a written process of communication between two or more specific individuals or groups (real or fictional) who find themselves in a situation of spatial distance, or more precisely, who are not in direct, face-to-face contact. As a result of this spatial distance, and of the time-lag necessary for the letter to arrive at its destination, epistolary exchanges imply a temporal distance, which will find a reflection in the temporal deixis adopted in the letter itself.

Sender and addressee may be represented in the text of the letter through personal pronouns of the first, second, or third person singular, or also through the first, second, and third person plural. Thus, in the writing of the message a spatial and temporal deixis is activated that is specific to the communicative situation created. The ways in which this happens are culture-bound and meaningful.²⁹

Most of the literature on epistolarity, ancient and modern, stresses the fact that the ideological underpinnings of letter writing are *philophronesis*, *parousia*, and *homilia*, and that the letter's main function is to maintain friendly relations, substitute for the sender's presence, and continue a conversation. Thus, sending a letter is seen as a way of making oneself present during one's absence, of binding together two distant persons, as in a dialogue.³⁰ Yet, a minority of critics have highlighted the monologic, rather than dialogic, character of the letter.³¹ While this varies from situation to situation, it is important to stress that epistolary communication, when imposed (by choice, or by the circumstances) as a substitute for face-to-face communication, may have the effect of creating a distance. This is an aspect keenly felt in the Greek tradition. More generally, the interplay of

²⁹ The above is a modified version of the definition given by Sallaberger (1999: 9), in his model study of Old-Babylonian letter writing; see also Trapp 2003: 1–2; Gibson and Morrison 2007. Létoublon (2003) offers a definition that, while strongly culture-specific (i.e. closely linked to our own, as well as to the ancient Greeks', notion of a letter), highlights important points. Edmunds 2008 has an excellent discussion of deixis (the system of reference that, through deictic expressions such as pronouns or verbal forms, points to the (usually) extralinguistic contextual situation) in Greek and Latin literature.

³⁰ Koskeniemi 1956: 34–47; 152; 92: 'Die Aufgabe des Briefes ist ja eine doppelte: er dient nicht nur als Benachrichtigungsmittel, sondern auch als ein persönliches, vereinigendes Band' ('The letter has a double purpose: it serves not just as a means to inform, but also as a personal, connecting link'); cf. Martin 2010: 189–91.

³¹ Cf. Sallaberger 1999: 9–19; Klauck 2006: 3, citing an extraordinary passage from one of Kafka's letters to Milena: 'You know after all how I hate letters. All the misfortune of my life . . . derives, one could say, from letters, or from the possibility of writing letters. People have hardly deceived me, but letters always . . . The easy possibility of letter-writing must—seen merely theoretically—have brought into the world a terrible disintegration of souls. It is, in fact, an intercourse with ghosts, and not only with the ghost of the recipient but also with one's own ghost which develops between the lines of the letter one is writing and even more so in a series of letters when one letter corroborates the other and can refer to it as a witness. How on earth did anyone get the idea that people can communicate with one another by letter! Of a distant person one can think, and of a person that is near one can catch hold—all else goes beyond human strength. Writing letters, however, means to denude oneself before the ghosts, something for which they greedily wait.' (F. Kafka, *Letters to Milena*, ed. W. Haas, trans. T. and J. Stern (New York, 1953), 229).

distance and closeness is to be viewed as a distinctive factor of epistolary communication that can be spun both ways and that leaves traces at the textual level. 'Ordinary, face-to-face conversation works on the assumption that any uttered sentence has as its deictic center (*origo*) the person who utters it and as its spatio-temporal reference the moment and place of the utterance itself';³² with a letter, however, no matter how close to ordinary conversation the exchange may be felt to be, there is a clear separation between the time of composition (the Coding Time), the time (or times) to which the letter itself may refer, and the time in which the addressee receives the letter and reads it (the Receiving Time).³³ It is this situation that is so often exploited in narratives, for instance in the novel; in the ancient world, the time needed for a letter to reach its destination meant that this gap would actually often play an extremely important role.

Finally, specific formal elements permit the definition of a text as a letter; among them, the most important is the introductory formula, naming sender and addressee. The characteristics of this introductory formula, usually reflecting the relationship existing between the sender and the addressee, are culturally determined, and thus changing; but the existence of some kind of introductory formula is necessary for a text to be defined as a letter. Other elements contribute to determining the epistolary status of a text, such as formulae of transition to the central part, wishes of good health, closing formulae with greetings; but their importance for the definition of a letter as such is less central, while their dependence on the socio-cultural context is heavier.³⁴

1.3. TRANSMISSION

The ease or difficulty of conveying a message to its recipient obviously shapes both the perception of the message and the very choice of whether to rely on a message for communication. A situation of easy transmission gives the impression (often deceptive) that the message itself is reliable and transparent, that it indeed offers a window onto the events; it also makes it easy for everyone to share in this system of conveyance, so that the society as a whole lives in an interconnected world. In the absence of easy ways of conveying letters, the very fact of sending one takes on the connotation of an event, of something special and particularly meaningful; moreover, the sender has to reckon with the likelihood of delays in the delivery, and with the possibility of the loss of the letter itself—delays and loss of messages play an important role in the Greek novel, but also earlier in Greek tragedy.³⁵ However, it is important to distinguish, in the case of archaic and classical Greece, between long-distance and short-distance communication (e.g. between two

³² D'Alessio 2004: 267–8.

³³ Cf. Green 1992: 126–7. For such an analysis, applied to epigrams, see Day 2010: 112–20.

³⁴ Importance of prescript: White 1981–2: 92. Interesting remarks on formal and rhetorical aspects of the prescript and the body of letters in Tite 2010; Martin 2010. More on epistolary formulae below, 35–47.

³⁵ e.g. Létoublon 2003. This happened also in reality: cf. the rich picture of the transmission of letters in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt in Parsons 1980: 5–6; Head 2009a and 2009b.

cities, or within the *chora* of the same polis), as well as between private (personal) and official communication. For personal correspondence one had to rely on the goodwill of individual travellers (*xenoi*, merchants, *theoroi*) that might be going in the direction needed; there was thus no guarantee that the message would effectively reach the addressee. Since there never was a civilian postal service, sending letters at a long distance, although not a rarity, must have been, at least until the Hellenistic period, mainly limited to specific categories of messenger such as merchants or soldiers on campaign. Messages could certainly also be sent at a short distance through slaves or servants, or again through the agency of the occasional passer-by or neighbour, and often the sender would write in the letter, as a form of guarantee for the recipient, the name of the person to whom the message had been given. For the archaic and classical period at any rate, our documentation includes mainly letters of long-distance traders, or small notes of limited importance meant for local recipients.³⁶

Official communication between poleis, or between magistrates and poleis, fared only marginally better. There were *ἄγγελοι* (messengers) and *κήρυκες* (public heralds);³⁷ for longer distances that needed to be covered quickly, some cities had couriers, the so-called *ήμεροδρόμοι* (day-runners) or *δρομοκήρυκες* (couriers), such as the Athenian Pheidippides, who according to Herodotus covered in two days the distance from Athens to Sparta (Hdt. 6. 105–6).³⁸ In time of war, a general would usually have at his disposal some particularly fast and trustworthy runners: Herodotus mentions the Argives sending a *hemerodromos* ‘after finding the best of their runners’ to warn Mardonius of the arrival of the Spartans with Pausanias (Hdt. 9. 12); the wording (*πέμπουσι κήρυκα τῶν ἡμεροδρόμων ἀνευρόντες τὸν ἄριστον ἐς τὴν Ἀττικὴν*) makes it clear that the Argives disposed of a pool of day-runners for this type of purpose, from which they chose the best. That most poleis will have had some fast long-distance runners among their heralds is also made likely by the casual tone with which Socrates compares the exertion involved in entering into a discussion with Protagoras on Protagoras’ terms to competing in the *stadion*, performing in the long-distance race (*δόλιχος*), or keeping up with an *hemerodromos* (Plat. *Prot.* 335e). Similarly, Aeschines mentions as a matter of fact that the Phocian tyrant Phalaecus had couriers (*δρομοκήρυκες*) at his disposal, who brought back news of how matters were in Athens. And Aeneas Tacticus in his *Poliorketika* suggests that ‘the trumpeter and the runners should be based and spend their time around the general’s tent, so that if there is any need of signalling or bringing a message they will be ready’.³⁹ War, as one might have expected, is one of the contexts in which

³⁶ Overall discussion in Longo 1981: 27–30; Klauck 2006: 63–5; Llewelyn 1994: 26–57 focuses on the Hellenistic and Roman period; see also Head 2009a on named letter carriers in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, and Head 2009b for fascinating material on the role of letter carriers in Jewish letters.

³⁷ Longo 1981: 30–22, who stresses their subordinate role: their duty was ‘to repeat’.

³⁸ *Δρομοκήρυξ*, ‘runner herald’, is attested in the lexica of Hesychius (*δρομοκήρυξ: ὁ ἐπὶ σπουδῆς πεμπόμενος τὰς ἐπικηρυκείας ποιήσασθαι, ἡμεροδρόμος*) and Harpocration, s.v., as well as in Photius and other lexica, but also in Aeschin. 2. 130 (the *dromokerykes* of the tyrant Phalaecus), Polyaeus, *Strat.* 5. 26. 1 and Aen. Tact. 22. 3. Discussion in Matthews 1974. On Pheidippides, see below, 113 and 117.

³⁹ Aen. Tact. 22. 3: *Περὶ δὲ τὸ στρατήγιον σκηνοῦν καὶ διατελεῖν αἰετὸν τὸν σαλπικτήν καὶ τοὺς δρομοκήρυκας, <ἵν’>, ἵνα τι δέη σημεῖναι ἢ παραγγεῖλαι, ἐξ ἐτοίμου ὑπάρχουσι*; another reference to *dromokerykes* in Aen. Tact. 22. 22.

hemerodromoi/dromokerykes are most often found.⁴⁰ However, these messengers might have carried indifferently a written or an oral message; the difference would not have been felt, since one and the same messenger had to cover the distance from sender to recipient. And for a diplomatic exchange, a polis would have rather sent ambassadors, chosen ad hoc for their appropriateness to the mission and their ability in speaking; they would have spoken in support of the civic decree, with far more effective results than simply handing over a letter. Messages might even be given to heralds orally rather than in writing: if captured, they would probably not be tortured to force them to deliver information—heralds in theory were sacred—while a letter, if intercepted, would instantly betray whatever plans were being made.⁴¹

The combination of elements that might have led to the development of an organized system of communication and transport (size of the territory controlled, political power, strongly centralized administrative structure, and presence of disruptive forces such as strong enemies on the frontiers, ethnic diversity within the state, or power of local officials) was simply not present, or not for long enough, in Classical Greece.⁴² A postal service of sorts was developed only in the Hellenistic kingdoms, through adapting the one that had been in place under the Achaemenids and, even before, in Assyria. The Persian system had been described by Herodotus and later by Xenophon; it finds its most striking expression in a passage of *De mundo*, in which Asia is described as entirely covered by day-runners, spies or scouts, message-bearers, and especially overseers of beacon-towers (ἡμεροδρόμοι τε καὶ σκοποὶ καὶ ἀγγελιαφόροι φρυκτωριῶν τε ἐποπτήρες), the last working κατὰ διαδοχάς, ‘in relays’, so that the king can know the same day what is happening over all the land he controls.⁴³ Diodorus narrates that in 302 BC Antigonus created a network of βιβλιαφόροι (‘letter carriers’), adapting what had been the Achaemenid relay system to the necessities of what would become the Seleucid kingdom;⁴⁴ the Ptolemies further developed the system, establishing a

⁴⁰ Philostratus (*Gymn.* 4) links the invention of the δόλιχος, the long run of 24 stades at Olympia, to the fact that the Arcadian *dromokerykes* had to go to Greece for matters related to war, and were not allowed to use horses: frequently running the *dolichos* proved a good training. (The passage is of course to be taken as significant of how long distance running was seen rather than as an explanation of how it came to be: ‘Greece’ is impossibly vague).

⁴¹ Lewis 1996: 148.

⁴² Llewelyn 1994: 4. Thus, the *Suda*’s definition (η305 Adler) of *hemerodromoi* links them directly to royal activity: ‘Day-runner: the sun. Those who serve the royal orders most quickly are also called so. The *hemerodromoi* are young men, slightly older than ephebes, near to their first beards, who serve such needs, equipped with bows and arrows, javelins and slings, and nothing more. For these things are useful to them for travel by road’ (ἡμεροδρόμος· ὁ ἥλιος. λέγονται δὲ καὶ οἱ ταῖς βασιλικαῖς διατάξεις ταχύτατα διακονούμενοι. οἱ ἡμεροδρόμοι νέοι δ’ εἰσὶν, ἐφήβων ὀλίγον πρεσβύτεροι, πρωτογενείων ἐγγύς, ταῖς τοιαύταις ὑπηρετούμενοι χρεῖαις· τόξων καὶ βελῶν, ἀκοντίων καὶ πυροβόλων λίθων ἐπιφερόμενοι πλέον οὐδέν· ταῦτα γὰρ αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὴν ὁδοπορίαν γίνεται χρήσιμα.)

⁴³ [Arist.] *De mundo* 398^a30–5. Cf. Hdt. 8. 8. 1–2; Xen. *Cyr.* 8. 6. 17–18; Llewelyn 1994: 2–5; Klauck 2006: 60–3.

⁴⁴ D.S. 19. 57. 5: αὐτοὺς δὲ πᾶσαν τὴν Ἀσίαν, ἧς ἦν κύριος, διέλαβε πυρσοῖς καὶ βυβλιαφόροις, δι’ ὧν ὁξέως ἤμελλον ὑπηρετεῖσθαι πάντα. See also, for the period of the Successors, D.S. 19. 13. 5, 7; 19. 14. 4; 19. 85. 5; 19. 100. 3. βιβλιαφόρος (or βυβλιαφόρος) is regularly used in Diodorus for a messenger transmitting a written message: so for those sent by the Selinuntioi to Gelon and by the Athenians to the Spartans at the time of the Persian wars, 11. 21. 4 and 11. 28. 5; for the couriers between Pausanias and the King, 11. 45. 2; *bibliaphoroi* are sent by the Selinuntioi to the Syracusans, 13. 54. 3; in 14. 101. 2

regular postal service for official communication, with relays for riders throughout the kingdom, and using camels for the transportation of heavier goods;⁴⁵ from the Hellenistic period onwards the term *γραμματοφόρος*, ‘letter carrier’, is attested (first in Polybius, although Phylarchus may have already used it);⁴⁶ finally Strabo, writing in the time of Augustus, equates *hemerodromoi* and *grammatophoroi*, giving the impression that a day-runner is someone who essentially carries dispatches—as was probably by then indeed the case.⁴⁷ The royal letters that the Seleucids sent to their administrators reveal the multiple relays required for the transmission of royal orders; but it is important to keep in mind that this structure covered only the territories internal to the kingdom, and would thus not have been of any use in international diplomacy.

1.4. ANCIENT GREEK TERMINOLOGY

Let us now turn to the ancient terminology for letter writing: for the variety of epistolary types might find a reflection in the terminology, or the terminology might give us a clue as to how to view the various types of letters.

English has two main words for a written message sent by one person to another (or to others): ‘epistle’, and ‘letter’.⁴⁸ Both terms have their root in the classical past: epistle goes back to Greek *ἐπιστολή*, via the Latin borrowing *epistula*, while ‘letter’ derives from Latin *littera* (the Greek uses *γράμμα* or *στοιχεία* to cover the same field of meanings). In modern-day English, epistle is chiefly used ironically of very long or pretentious letters; for formal or particularly elaborate letters, ranking as literary productions; for letters having a public character; or for letters addressed to a body of persons, such as the New Testament ones.⁴⁹ ‘Letter’ today has three main senses. The term is most frequently used to

we find *bibliaphoroi* of the Thourioi; the Macedonian kings send *bibliaphoroi* (Eurydice, 19. 1. 4), as does Agatocles (20. 18. 1). Hence, the occurrence of the term in a passage where Diodorus relies on Ctesias (D.S. 2. 26. 8 = *FGH* 688 F 1b, concerning Sardanapallus) cannot automatically be ascribed to Ctesias.

⁴⁵ Muir 2009: 11–12, quoting some fascinating documents (a receipt from the association of couriers based in Oxyrhynchus, *BGU* 1232, and a part of the day-book for one of the postal offices, dated to 255 BC, from P.Hib. 110; a longer extract from the same papyrus is in Austin 2006: 546–8, no. 309); P.Oxy iv 710, 1–4 (111 BC) mentions 44 *bybliaphoroi* in the Oxyrhynchite nome. The detailed discussion of the official ancient postal systems by Llewelyn 1994: 1–25, moves from the Persian empire to Ptolemaic Egypt, and then focuses on the Roman period.

⁴⁶ *γραμματοφόρους* appears twice in Phylarchus *FGH* 81 F 55; but the fragment is preserved in Polybius (2. 61. 1–5), in a passage in which he criticizes Phylarchus, and the precise wording may well be Polybius’ own. See below, 168–70.

⁴⁷ Strabo 5. 4. 13, speaking of the Picentes: *ἀντὶ δὲ στρατείας ἡμεροδρομεῖν καὶ γραμματοφορεῖν ἀπεδείχθησαν*. ‘And instead of doing military service, they were appointed to serve as couriers and letter carriers’ (the reason being that they had sided with Hannibal; it is slightly surprising to find communication entrusted to suspect populations). Interestingly, Augustus went back to the principle of one messenger covering all the distance (but using relays of horses), because the messenger could thus also convey the message orally, and add further information (Suet. *Aug.* 49. 3).

⁴⁸ One could add ‘missive’, i.e. something that is sent (from Latin *mittere*), generally a written document, and so often a letter; it is a relatively generic term.

⁴⁹ See *OED*, s.v. ‘Epistle’, for a detailed list of the various meanings and uses of the term.

denote a conventional symbol (an alphabetic character) representing a phoneme or a group of phonemes. It can also be the precise terms of a statement (the letter as opposed to the spirit of a text). Finally, it denotes a communication in writing, addressed to a person or body of persons; it can be either private, or else public, official, and authoritative in character.⁵⁰ The last sense is the one which will mainly occupy us here; but let us meanwhile note that the same richness and fluidity that we encountered in the English terminology was already present in Greek and Latin usage.

Latin *littera* corresponds very precisely to Greek γράμμα. In both Latin and Greek, the same term, *littera/litterae* and γράμμα/γράμματα, is used to indicate the graphic signs with which language is noted, as well as the 'letter' *qua* written message. This is rather striking, and needs some further attention. *Prima facie*, the fact that a term used to indicate a very basic notion, the graphic sign, central to any form of writing, is also used to denote written communication might appear to speak to the great importance of the latter. And yet this kind of reasoning can cut both ways; before we understand the implication of this sharing of names, we need to fully grasp the meaning of γράμμα (*littera*) 'letter as alphabetic sign'. Moreover, just as in ancient Greek other terms besides *grammata* could be used to indicate the alphabetic letters (*stoicheion* for instance), so other more specific terms for 'letter' existed. A detailed analysis of the terminology reveals that the various terms imply specific connotations and different ways of looking at the object in question.

The distinction between *grammata* and *stoicheia* ('elements') has been recently discussed by Jesper Svenbro; on the basis of a number of passages from the scholia to the *Techne* of Dionysius Thrax, he concludes that *gramma/grammata* denotes the individual alphabetic letter, considered on its own and deprived of a meaningful context, while *stoicheion/stoicheia* indicates the letter as part of an intelligible sequence (*taxis*);⁵¹ as such, the *stoicheion* is always on the side of the sound. *Gramma* appears thus as the unmarked, more general term, while *stoicheion* is the marked, specialized one.⁵² This basic distinction, if extended to the entire range of

⁵⁰ Detailed list of the various meanings and uses of the term in *OED*, s.v. 'Letter' (n) 1. Italian 'lettera' and French 'lettre' present the same richness in meanings.

⁵¹ Svenbro 2008. For an allusion to the distinction between *grammata* and *stoicheia*, see Dion. Thrax, *Techne* 9: 'There are 24 *grammata*, from α to ω. They are named *grammata* because they are impressed through drawing and scratching (διὰ τὸ γραμμαῖς καὶ ξυσμαῖς τυποῦσθαι); for among the ancients *grapsai* meant to scratch, as in Homer 'Now you boast of having scratched the flat of my foot' (Il. 11. 388). They are also called *stoicheia* because they are in file and order (τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ στοιχεῖα καλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἔχειν στοιχόν τινα καὶ τάξιν)'. On this passage see Lallot 1998: 45 and 95–6; Svenbro 2008.

⁵² Svenbro 2008, and further Lallot 1998: 96, 98. The clearest distinction between the two is in schol. Dion. Thr. 197. 17–23: 'And for this reason he says that they are *stoicheia*, because they have a file and order, the ones in respect to the others (διὰ τὸ ἔχειν αὐτὰ <στοιχόν τινα καὶ> τάξιν πρὸς ἄλληλα); for in this case they are *stoicheia*. When they are not written in order (μὴ κατὰ τάξιν γράφονται), they are called *grammata* and not *stoicheia*. As for instance *pros*, it is written correctly and *kata taxis*; for this reason, they are called *stoicheia*, for as *stoicheia*, they produce the *pros*. If, however, I change their order, writing *rpos*, they are called *grammata* and not *stoicheia*—because they are not anymore *kata taxis*.' (οἶον *pros*, ἰδὸν καταλλήλως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γέγραπται, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ στοιχεῖα λέγεται, ἀποτελοῦσι γὰρ ὡς στοιχεῖα τὴν πρὸς· ἐὰν δὲ ἐναλλάξ γράψω *rpos*, γράμματα μὲν λέγεται, οὐκέτι δὲ στοιχεῖα, διὰ τὸ μὴ κατὰ τάξιν αὐτὰ εἶναι.)

meanings comprised by *gramma*, implies that *grammata* is used for a written message, a 'letter', simply as a result of the unmarked nature of the term: it denotes an ensemble of visual signs, not yet deciphered, not yet provided with sound. This may be taken further to imply that the choice of *grammata*, when opposed to the other possibilities for indicating 'letter as written message' (e.g. ἐπιστολή), marks its writtenness, rather than aspects related to content, conveyance, and meaning.

A number of other terms can designate long-distance written communication;⁵³ they may be organized in three groups, depending on whether the focus is on the support of writing, on the writtenness of the message, or on the message itself.

The first group, based on a metonymic usage, includes those terms referring to the material support on which the document is written, such as papyrus, leather, lead, or ceramic, or to its shape (tablets).

The most important in this set is βυβλίον or βιβλίον, deriving from βύβλος, papyrus. *Byblion* may have in Herodotus the generic meaning of 'papyrus-roll' (compare Hdt. 5. 58.3), but it usually indicates what is unequivocally a letter (3. 40, 43, 128, here eight times). Throughout classical antiquity, the term was used for book, papyrus roll, document in general, and also specifically letter; in Polybius and Diodorus Siculus for instance, βυβλιαφόρος means 'letter carrier'.⁵⁴ But in general *byblion* will over time be used more and more with the specific meaning of 'book', 'book-roll'.

Πίναξ ('tablet'), attested in the *Odyssey* with the basic meaning of 'wooden plank' (12. 67) or 'dish' (14. 141, a meaning that would last), is used in the *Iliad* (6. 169) for the folded support of a written message; it is found in connection with various kinds of writing also later, to indicate, for example, votive tablets (Aesch. *Suppl.* 463), lists (Aesch. fr. 281a Radt), geographical maps (as in Hdt. 5. 49), paintings (Simon. fr. 178 PMG), and catalogues, such as those compiled by Callimachus (Diog. Laert. 8. 86, Athen. 6. 244 A; cf. Callim. fr. 429–53 Pf.).⁵⁵

In its meanings 'writing tablet' and 'letter', πίναξ competes with δέλτος (and its diminutive δελτίον), a term of Semitic origin that occurs very frequently in fifth-century drama to indicate writing tablets, metaphorical or real, but also letters.⁵⁶ The term was never reserved for a specific type of document.

The same strategy of naming the document from the writing support is used by the writer of one of the earliest Greek letters, who refers to his μολύβδιον ('small

⁵³ What follows builds on Stirewalt 1993: 67–87.

⁵⁴ Plb. 4. 22. 2, D.S. 2. 26, and P.Hal. 7. 6 (232 BC), where βυβλιαφόρος is found. The πτυχαῖς βίβλων in Aesch. *Suppl.* 947 may be 'folds of books', as in Weir Smyth's translation, or also, as is more likely, folded letters (sealed and conveying a decision): see discussion below, 194–7. The meaning of 'book' is attested already in Aristophanes, *Av.* 974; cf. the discussion below, 242.

⁵⁵ Chantraine 1999, s.v. In view of some of the later meanings (geographical map or votive tablet) it is perhaps not accidental that *pinax* is chosen in the *Iliad* for a letter marked with σήματα λυγρά, terrible, significant signs, but not necessarily alphabetical. In Aesch. fr. 281a Radt. (the so-called 'Dike' fragment) the variation between *deltos* and *pinax* to indicate the same object may point to the catalogic aspect of Dike's reading: the goddess writes down the offences of the mortals on a *deltos*, l. 21, but when the moment comes she recites the catalogue of names from the *pinax*, l. 22.

⁵⁶ Drama: see below, chs. 3. 3. 1 and 5. 1. Herodotus uses *deltos* in 7. 239 for the letter sent by Demaratus to Sparta; the Second Platonic Letter presents itself as a *deltos* (2. 312d). See Chantraine 1999, s.v.

piece of lead'), most likely because of the lack of any specific term for letter.⁵⁷ *Μολύβδιον* too is not specific: it is used for instance for the accounts of the temple of Nemesis in Rhamnous;⁵⁸ and Pausanias (9. 31. 4) states that the Boeotians living around the Helicon showed him a *μόλυβδον* damaged by time, close to the spring on which Hesiod's *Erga* were inscribed.

Similarly, Herodotus affirms that the Ionians used the term *διφθέρα* ('skin') for the papyrus sheet, because in ancient times, owing to the rarity of papyrus, they had used the skin of goats and sheep, a statement that has now been confirmed by one of the earliest Greek letters on lead, in which *diphthera* is used for commercial records.⁵⁹ All these terms of course are not specific to letters; they may serve to indicate almost any type of written documents, including letters. This kind of use, where the document takes its name from the support, and where the name does not give any hints as to the nature of the written document itself, seems to have been more widespread in the sixth and fifth century BC; it clearly reflects a situation in which a specific generic terminology does not yet exist (one is reminded of the similar case of the Solonian *axones* and *kyrbeis*). From the fifth century onwards, however, the vocabulary tends towards a greater specificity, and documents are named on the basis of their content or their function.

The second group is also non-specific, and maintains this non-specificity; it is formed by derivatives of *γράφω*.⁶⁰ *Γράμματα* is of course the most important term among them: Herodotus uses *γράμματα* for all types of writings, and in particular for inscriptions; but the term is found for letters in 1. 124 and 5. 14.⁶¹ Other terms of this family can be used to denote long-distance communication. Thus, *γραφή*, piece of writing, is used in the plural in Euripides (*IT* 735: *πορθμεύσειν γραφάς*); the same letter will be referred to with *γράμματα* ten verses later (*IT* 745). Thucydides uses *γραφή* for the letter of Pausanias to Xerxes (1. 128. 7); the term recurs in 1. 129. 1, where it is juxtaposed to *ἐπιστολή*. Here the juxtaposition, in the sentence *τοσαῦτα μὲν ἡ γραφή ἐδήλου, Ξέρξης δὲ ᾗσθη τε τῇ ἐπιστολῇ* ('So much the writing revealed, and Xerxes was pleased by the message') shows well the distinction between the two terms, one highlighting the visual aspect and pointing at the letters out of which the message is composed, the other indicating the import of the message itself, its content. *Ἀντίγραφον* is used for the copy of an

⁵⁷ The letter of Achillodoros from Berezan, dated to 550/500 BC, discussed below, 38–9; also appendix 1, no. 1.

⁵⁸ Lead sheet, dated to c.500–480 BC (*τὸ χρέμα ἀνέλοται τὸς ἱεροποιοὺς τὸ ἐν τῷ μολυβδίῳ*, *SEG* 38. 13.1.4): Dubois 1996: 51.

⁵⁹ Hdt. 5. 58. 3: *καὶ τὰς βύβλους διφθέρας καλέουσι ἀπὸ τοῦ παλαιοῦ οἱ Ἴωνες*; see below, 28 and n. 23; appendix 1, no. 5; and Chantraine 1999, s.v. 'διφθέρα'. Note also Eur. fr. 627 K., *εἰσὶν γάρ, εἰσὶ διφθέραι μελεγγραφεῖς πολλῶν γέμουσαι Λοξίου γηρυμάτων* (discussed below, 217–18).

⁶⁰ Overall description in Chantraine 1999, s.v.

⁶¹ The *Lexicon* to Herodotus of Powell lists the following senses of *γράμμα* (34 times altogether): 'letter of the alphabet' (14 times); 'piece of writing', usually inscription (18 times); in the plural, 'an epistle' (twice: 1. 124. 1 and 5. 14). *Γραφή* is used for 'painting' (5 times: 3. 24. 2; 4. 36. 2; 2. 78; 2. 86. 2; 2. 182. 1, the last three instances referring to imitations of a painting) or 'a picture' (3 times: 1. 164. 3; 2. 73. 1; 2. 73. 2). *Γραμματιστής* appears 8 times, as 'scribe' (7. 100. 1; 8. 90. 4), 'secretary' (3. 123. 1, and of Persian satraps 3. 128. 3 bis, 3. 128. 5), and 'treasurer' (2. 28. 1; 2. 28. 5). *γράφω* refers 7 times to the author's own writing; 5 times it means 'depict'; 18 times 'write', 'write down', on all sort of supports; 4 times 'cause to be written'. Instances of *ἀνα-*, *ἀπο-*, *ἐγ-*, *ἐπι-*, *κατα-*, *περι-*, *προσεγ-*, *συγγράφω* have been discussed where relevant—they need not detain us here.

original writing that may or may not have been a letter, while *γραμματίον* (found for instance in Antiphon) indicates a small note (again, this may or may not be a letter, depending on the situations).

The connotations of this group change in time, as is perhaps best shown by the fact that in Herodotus *γράμματα* mainly speak (inscriptions and other written documents are very often introduced with a formula of the type *τὰ δὲ γράμματα ἔλεγε ταῦτα*), while in Thucydides they tend to show (*δηλοῦσα*); in Euripides, it is rather the tablet that speaks.⁶² Overall, the principal connotation of this group seems to be the focus on the visual and sonorous (once vocalized) aspect of the message, as well as on the notion of the stability and permanency of written communication.

As for the third group of terms used to denote a ‘letter’, it is organized around the verb *ἐπιστέλλω*. The verb, and with it the noun *ἐπιστολή*, are attested in Aeschylus and Sophocles with the meaning of ‘oral order, injunction’ (there is no certain mention of a letter in the extant works of these authors). In Euripides however *epistolai* in the plural is used both for an order transmitted orally (*IT* 1446, *Ba.* 442) and for a written communication (*IT* 589).⁶³ A passage of the *Iphigenia among the Taurians* illustrates well the difference between an *epistole* and a *deltos*: Iphigenia says,

ἐγὼ δὲ ταρβῶ μὴ ἀπονοστήσας χθονὸς | θῆται παρ’ οὐδὲν τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς | ὁ τήνδε
μέλλων δέλτων εἰς Ἄργος φέρειν (Eur. *IT* 731–3).

I fear that, once he has left this land, the person who should bring to Argos this tablet will make no case of my letter/request.

The tablet is the physical object, the stage prop designated with the deictic *τήνδε* (this tablet here); *epistole* is, once again, the content of the message (Iphigenia is afraid that the messenger, once he has left, may simply throw away the tablet with her message rather than delivering it), but also more generally the request, as made both through words and in writing. This interpretation is reinforced by the similar distinction (involving, however, now also *grammata*) made slightly later in the same play (Eur. *IT* 582–94): there, *deltos* is again the tablet/letter as object; *epistolai* in the plural refers clearly to the letter-as-content; while the letter-as-writing (non-pertinent content, because viewed from the point of view of Pylades, who simply has to ‘carry its light weight’) is termed *grammata*.⁶⁴

A passage from an unknown play of Cratinus (fr. 316 K.–A.) confirms that at least until the third quarter of the fifth century *epistole* does not refer to a letter, but rather to an order: the fragment (*ἄκουε νῦν καὶ τήνδε τὴν ἐπιστολήν*) is cited in Zonaras’ lexicon (p. 804) in order to support the claim that *ἐπιστολήν καὶ τὴν ἐντολήν λέγουσιν*, ‘they also call an order *epistole*’.⁶⁵

⁶² The shift in the terminology possibly mirrors a shift from reading aloud (or public performance) to silent, individual reading.

⁶³ On the semantic evolution of *ἐπιστολή* in tragedy see Stéfanis 1997: 169–91. The use of letters in the *Iphigenia* plays of Euripides is discussed below, 224–35.

⁶⁴ The passage is discussed in detail below, 225.

⁶⁵ Intriguing ancient discussion in the Lexicon of Orus, fr. A 42 (a fragment partly preserved in Zonaras’ Lexicon, s.v. *Ἐπιστολή*): *ἐπιστολήν καὶ τὴν ἐντολήν λέγουσιν. Κρατίνος· ἄκουε νῦν καὶ τήνδε τὴν ἐπιστολήν* (fr. 316 K.–A.). καὶ ὁ Πλάτων (*Tim.* 71 D)· *μεμνημένοι τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπιστολῆς οἱ ξυστήσαντες ἡμᾶς*. In the apparatus, Alpers points to the *Synagoge lexeon chresimon* (746 Cunningham

A situation similar to that of tragedy is found in historiography: in Herodotus ἐπιστέλλω may be used for an oral or a written message; but ἐπιστολή is used only of oral injunctions.⁶⁶ In Thucydides, besides a few instances in which it is impossible to decide, there are some very clear cases in which ἐπιστολή (or the plural ἐπιστολαί) refers to (the content of) a written message (e.g. 1. 129, discussed above).⁶⁷ Only with Xenophon does ἐπιστολή systematically mean 'letter', with the singular referring to one document only, and the plural to an ensemble of documents.⁶⁸ From the fourth century onwards, *epistole* will be the normal term to indicate a letter (and manuals on how to write letters will bear names such as τύποι ἐπιστολικοί).

The examination of the terminology allows three conclusions. First, until the fourth century there is no specific term for 'letter': throughout the fifth century, the most specific terms are *grammata* and *epistole*. The first refers to letters and other types of writing (Herodotus, for instance, uses *grammata* of inscriptions); the second to written orders as well as oral injunctions. When a writer wants to make it clear that he is talking of a letter, the solution that tends to be adopted, in the case of *deltos* and *pinax*, but also with *grammata*, is to draw attention to the closed, 'folded' aspect of the missive, for instance via the use of the adjective πτυκτός, 'folded', or a periphrasis such as δέλτου πτυχαί, 'folds of the tablet'; the seal functions as an indicator, stressing, at the same time, the secretive or deceptive connotations of this mode of communication.

Second, it is possible to distinguish further between the two terms *grammata* and *epistole*: the former emphasizes the visual, external aspect of the actual writing; the latter puts the stress on the content. In turn, when the material support of the written message plays a role, authors employ the metonymic group of terms (*deltos*, *pinax*). Consequently, the distinction between 'letter' and 'epistle' argued for by some modern scholars, who wish to define the former as the direct expression of the writer's feeling and the latter as an elaborate, literary document, has no basis in the ancient terminology; more generally, such a distinction does not seem to fit the way the ancients conceived of epistolary communication.

= Bachmann *Anecd.* 232. 16) = Suda ε 2632 = schol. Plat. *epist.* 337 ε: ἐπιστολή· ἐντολή, ἐπίσκηψις; sch. Vet. Soph. *Aj.* 781: ἐπιστολάς· ἐντολάς (and note the fascinating schol. rec. Soph. *Aj.* 781ab: τάσδ' ἐπιστολάς· γράφεται καὶ ἐπιβολάς. ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπὶ προθέσεως καὶ τοῦ ἐντέλλομαι. b. ὁ μὲν Ὅμηρος ἐπιτολήν λέγει, οἱ δὲ νεώτεροι ἐπιστολάς, ἐντολάς, μηνύματα); schol. Soph. OC 1601: ἐπιστολάς· ἐντολάς, πράξεις; Hesych. ε 5255 ἐπιστολαί· ἐντολαί, ἐπιταγαί. Δισχύλος Προμηθεὺς διαγράμματα. καὶ ἐπιστάσεις; Eust. in *Il.*, 29. 15; 312. 6; Thom. *Ecloga nominum et verborum Atticorum*, ε 121. 1 (ἐπιστεῖλαι δὲ οὐ μόνον τὸ διὰ γραμμάτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ αὐτοπροσώπως κελεῦσαι. καὶ ἐπιστολή ὡσαύτως.) See also below, 241 and n. 192.

⁶⁶ Powell has two instances where ἐπιστέλλω means 'send a letter' (3. 40. 1 and 7. 239. 4); 5 where it means 'command' (6. 3bis; 4. 131. 2; 6. 97. 2; 7. 223. 1); ἐπιστολή always means 'injunction' (4. 10. 1; 6. 50. 3).

⁶⁷ The *Index Thucydideum* of Bétant lists nine instances of ἐπιστολή, and four of ἐπιστολαί in the plural; discussion below, 136–50.

⁶⁸ Cf. for ἐπιστολή: Xen. *Hell.* 1. 4. 3; 1. 7. 4; 7. 1. 39; *Anab.* 1. 6. 3 ter; 3. 1. 5; Cyr. 2. 2. 9 ter; 2. 2. 10; 4. 5. 26; 4. 5. 34; 5. 5. 4; 8. 2. 16; Ages. 8. 3; for ἐπιστολαί: Cyr. 8. 2. 17; Ages. 8. 3. See discussion below, 150–5.

Third, the fact that the term *gramma* is used to indicate ‘letters’ cannot be taken to indicate a strong correlation between writing and epistolarity: *gramma* is simply the unmarked term.⁶⁹ The terminology with which a narrative or the very text of a letter describe the letter are thus important, as they can give pointers to the specific aspect being highlighted in the ‘reading’ of the document.

Two ancient riddles on writing will provide a fitting closure to this discussion. They do not concern epistolary writing; but they give important clues as to the shifting and controversial place that writing—and written communication—occupies in the Greek imaginary. Both come from the fourteenth book of the *Anthologia Palatina*, a book specifically on riddles. The answer to the first one (*Anth. Pal.* 14. 45) is ‘wax’: ‘I am black, white, yellow, dry, and wet; and when you spread me on the plains of wood, by Ares and by the hand, I emit a voice, although not speaking’.⁷⁰ The second one (*Anth. Pal.* 14. 60) concerns ‘writing tablets’, and is built on much the same images as the preceding one: ‘Wood gave birth to me and iron reformed me; | I am the mystic receptacle of the Muses; | when shut, I am silent, but I speak when you unfold me; | Ares alone is the confidant of my conversations.’⁷¹ In both riddles, Ares points to the use of iron for the stylus, and to its ‘violent’ action in incising the wax; the notion that writing speaks while being at the same time silent is present in both, although exploited in different ways (note the presence of the same verb, *λαλέω*); the second riddle adds the Muses, hinting at the possibility of preserving memories offered by writing. ‘Mystic’ (*μυστικόν*) strikes here an odd, slightly dissonant chord: it may refer to the initiation needed to learn writing, but references to the difficulty of writing are something very rare in Greek literature: writing was a craft among others, not particularly connected with initiation into the Mysteries.⁷² A better alternative is to take ‘mystic’ in connection with the Muses, and to refer it to poetic initiation, or also to understand the term as marking the separateness, the privacy, of the written text itself, once the tablets are folded.

⁶⁹ The distinction between *litterae* and *epistula* in Latin seems to have run on almost opposite lines: according to Gavouille 2002, *epistula* refers mainly to the letter as an object, or to its specific form (author, addressee, style, length); *litterae* is the result of an enunciation, it refers mainly to the ‘words’ (the content). Nadjó 2004 offers a study of other Latin terms for ‘letter’.

⁷⁰ *Εἰμὶ μέλας, λευκός, ξανθὸς ξηρὸς τε καὶ ὑγρός· | εὖτε δὲ δουρατέων πεδίῳ ὕπερ ἐντανύσης με, | Ἀρεὶ καὶ παλάμῃ φθέγγομαι οὐ λαλέων.* Interestingly, a hexameter followed by an elegiac distich (an unusual structure), for a text built on opposites.

⁷¹ *Ὑλὴ μὲν με τέκει, κανούργησεν δὲ σίδηρος· | εἰμὶ δὲ Μουσῶν μυστικὸν ἐκδόχιον· | κλειομένη σιγῇ· λαλέω δ', ὅταν ἐκπετάσης με, | κοινωνὸν τὸν Ἀρη μῦθον ἔχουσα λόγων.* Note also the difficult riddle *Anth. Pal.* 14. 24, concerning probably two tablets (the equivalent of the two matrices mentioned) on which the stylus (the father who presides over memory) has written (‘generated’) a word (‘panther’) divided over the two tablets. Another such riddle (P. Lond. Lit. 63 = Pack² 1765) is discussed by Di Marco 2009.

⁷² There is however in the fifth- and fourth-century Athenian context a marked emphasis on writing in the context of mystery cults: cf. Scodel 2011.

Part I

Greek Beginnings

Writing and Letter Writing, Evidence and Representations

αὐτὰρ ὁ πάσῃ | Ἑλλάδι φωνήεντα καὶ ἔμφρονα δῶρα κομίζων | γλώσσης
ὄργανα τεύξεν ὁμόθροα, συμφυέος δέ | ἀρμονίης στοιχηδὸν ἔς ἄζυγα σύζυγα
μίξας | γραπτὸν ἀσιγήτοιο τύπον τορνῶσατο σιγῆς.

Nonn. *Dionys.* 4. 259–64

But Cadmus, bringing gifts of voice and thought for all Hellas, fashioned tools to echo the sounds of the tongue, and mingling sonant and consonant in one order of connected harmony, he rounded off a graven model of unsilenceable silence.

Writing and Letter Writing

The Evidence

At the beginning was the letter: it is often assumed that writing came into being as the substitute, the transcription, of an oral message that had to be sent at a distance.¹ The earliest Mesopotamian account of the invention of writing, a composition known as *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, part of a group of epics concerning the beginnings of Sumer and revolving around the conflict between two cities and their rulers, is a good example of this assumption.² The reason for the invention is in this story the fact that the messenger travelling between the city of Unug and Aratta, carrying to and fro the challenges posed by Enmerkar and the counter-requests sent in form of riddles by the Lord of Aratta, could not repeat one of the messages, because it was substantial and extensive, or too deep and difficult. Because of the impossibility of the tongue of the messenger to repeat such a message, Enmerkar ‘patted some clay and wrote the message as if on a tablet. Formerly, the writing of messages on clay was not established. Now, under that sun and on that day, it was indeed so. The lord of Kulaba inscribed the message like a tablet.’³ This account of the invention of writing will be further expanded upon by the story of the invention of the envelope by Sargon, also an early story; while in the first millennium, in Berossus’ account, writing will be presented as having been given to mankind, together with all the other crafts ‘and those things conducive to a settled and civilized life’, by a monster sent by the

¹ An instance of this ‘conventional wisdom’ is the story ‘How the First Letter Was Written’, in R. Kipling, *Just So Stories* (London, 1902), discussed in Harris 1986: 1–3. For the distance between spoken and written language, see Glassner 2003: 223–6; Cooper 2004; Robertson 2004 (esp. 19).

² Versions of these epics (not however of the one concerning the invention of writing) are attested already in texts of the twenty-sixth century BC from Abu Salabikh, while one text from Ebla of the twenty-fourth century BC shows that these narratives enjoyed a wide geographical diffusion: Glassner 2003: 11. Scholars agree on the fact that even if the tablets themselves date for the most part from the Isin-Larsa period (2017–1763), the Ur III period (2112–2004 BC) must have represented an important moment in the formation and evolution of the cycle: Vanstiphout 2004: 1, 13–14; Black 1998: 23–4 and n. 57.

³ *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, 501–6. On the story, see Vanstiphout 2004; Glassner 2003: 15–17; Klein 2000; Ceccarelli 2002. The reception of the message by the Lord of Aratta (‘The lord of Aratta looked at the tablet. The transmitted message was just nails, and his brow expressed anger. The lord of Aratta looked at his kiln-fired tablet’, in the *ETCSL* translation) is also extremely interesting, since it points at the ability of writing (and in particular cuneiform writing) to transmit more than just one meaning.

gods, Oannes, at a time preceding the flood.⁴ In the new version, writing is no longer connected with communication at a distance, but rather linked to memorialization, something that ties in well with the changed historical and social circumstances;⁵ as we shall see, an oscillation between commemorative and communicative functions is also present in Greek traditions.

Yet, if we move from the Near Eastern representations of the invention of writing to the actual documents, the first clay tablets in cuneiform writing are lists and economic or administrative documents.⁶ Nor are letters present among the first literary texts, which begin to appear some four hundred years after these documents. The first dated letters come from Ebla, and were written more than eight hundred years after the invention of writing.⁷ Unsurprisingly, there is a gap between representation (or discourse) and reality.

And in Greece? Starting with the last quarter of the eighth century BC, graffiti attest to a personal and widespread use of writing in the ancient Greek world; but alphabetic writing seems to have served initially mainly for dedications or funerary inscriptions, and then, slightly later, for recording monumental texts, that is, for public texts, or at any rate, texts circulating openly. This corresponds rather neatly to the way in which most Greek traditions on the invention of writing characterize the new craft: although a letter fleetingly and ominously figures in the *Iliad*, and although the earliest reference in Greek literature to something written thus concerns letter writing, the document is there presented as a (rather enigmatic) given, not worthy of discussion. Narratives of the discovery of writing, from the late sixth century throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, sharply differ from 'conventional wisdom' in presenting the new craft either as something that simply 'arrives' from the outside, not earmarked for any specific use, or also as something that is invented to allow organization (hence the importance of numbers), to enable recording, and to facilitate poetic composition. Letter writing enters the field of representations only in the second half of the fifth century, and in a rather negative way: harking back to the Iliadic occurrence, letters (and more generally communication at a distance) are marked as fraught with dangers (Palamedes), oriental, tyrannical, feminine (Atossa, Deioces). In this, Greek narratives differ remarkably from the Near Eastern accounts of the invention of writing: the communicative aspect is much less in evidence.⁸ The late entrance and negative connotation of letter writing in Greece has most likely to do with the very different socio-cultural context. Let us look at this in more detail.

Writing is already attested in the second millennium in the pre-Greek civilization of Minoan Crete, with the still undeciphered Cretan hieroglyphs and the slightly later Linear A, which is also not yet fully understood. The two types of

⁴ So in the account by Berossus, *FGrH* 680 F 1 = Verbrugghe and Wickersham 1996, F 1; see Glassner 2003: 10.

⁵ Michalowski 1999.

⁶ For the dynamic relationship between the Sumerian bureaucratic organization and the tool it produced, writing, see Green 1981; Englund 1998; Glassner 2003: 1–2; Cooper 2004; Veldhuis 2006. Robson 2007 introduces numeracy into the discussion.

⁷ See Michalowski 1993: 1–7, for an introduction to, and a selection of, early letters from Mesopotamia.

⁸ See also below, 63–71.

writing overlap in part: the first is attested for 2000–1600 BC, the second for 1850–1450 BC. Most documents appear to concern transactions. Sealstones and accounting tablets seem to be the main types of documents in Cretan hieroglyphics. Linear A too appears to have been used for accounts; it is attested mainly on Crete, but also in some places on the Greek mainland and on other islands.⁹ As for letter writing: if one of the most recent attempts at deciphering the Phaistos disc were to prove correct, the fired clay disc would contain a Luwian letter to Nestor.¹⁰ But the decipherments on offer are now legion. Moreover, if interpreted as a letter, the main interest of this document for a study of epistolography in ancient Greece would lie in the fact that it would show familiarity—a contact—with the epistolary genre at an early time, in an area later inhabited by Greeks; but such a familiarity can be inferred anyway from the well-attested contacts between the Minoans and later the Mycenaean Greeks on the one side, and the Hittites and Egyptians on the other.

Based on Linear A, a syllabic script called Linear B was developed to notate Mycenaean Greek.¹¹ Documents have been found both on Crete and in numerous localities of mainland Greece; on Crete they cover the period from c.1400 to 1250 BC, while on the mainland tablets written in Linear B are found until c.1200 BC. The documents we have concern mainly administration (accounts, catalogues, and lists are frequent), as well as religious or military issues; importantly, they are all temporary records, preserved only because of the accidental destruction of the archive by fire; no legal documents such as contracts, registrations of ownership, or loans have as yet come to light, nor are there any documents attesting to a broader use of writing. As Palaima states, ‘there are no Mycenaean literary, judicial, historical-propagandistic documents, no “private” economic records, no personal or official letters, and no documents relating to the scribal training or intended for scribal reference such as syllabic abecedaria, lexical lists, or sample forms of documents’.¹² There is some controversy as to the possibility of the existence of writing on non-durable materials. The discovery of remains interpretable as wooden folding tablets in the palace of Pylos adds some weight to the argument for the existence of writing on parchment—based among other things on the cursive form of the script, more suited to writing with a pen or

⁹ The most detailed survey of writing, from the Cretan pictographic to the Greek alphabet, is Heubeck 1979; although slightly outdated in respect to the numerous recent finds, it is still very much worth consulting. Uchitel 2004 gives an informed overview of Linear A documents; Schoep 2007 recognizes the mainly economic scope of the tablets and the administrative aspect of the use of sealstones, but prefers to stress the symbolic and ideological connotation of writing as expression of a legitimization strategy by the elite.

¹⁰ Achterberg et al. 2004 (letter of the Great King Tarhundaradus of Arzawa in Anatolia to Nestor king of Pylos: ‘At Mesara is Phaistos. To Nestor, to the great man in Ahhiyawa . . .’). Others however (e.g. Timm 2005) interpret the text in connection with Linear A. General comments on attempts at decipherment in Duhoux 2000. Almost nothing is certain about the disc: not the date, which oscillates between 1850 and 1600 (if the stratigraphic report of the excavator, Pernier, is to be trusted) to as low as 1400 BC, nor even its authenticity, according to Eisenberg 2008.

¹¹ Bennet 2008 offers a masterful survey of the problems linked to the transition from Cretan hieroglyphic and, more importantly, Linear A to Linear B, and provides a synthetic statistical overview of the function for which Linear A and B writings were used.

¹² Palaima 2004: 154.

brush and ink or paint than with a stylus on clay; but such writing might have served simply as a further stage of administration.¹³ There is also uncertainty as to the status of the scribes. Some of them were probably members of the elite, and it is possible to think that in some cases at least they were in charge of those activities they registered: they would have learnt the craft of writing as a consequence of their administrative and social position. But when the activities documented by one specific scribe concern sectors too diverse for it to be plausible that one person only was in charge of them, then those scribes will have been trained functionaries, providing administrative support to someone else.¹⁴

With the collapse of Mycenaean civilization in the twelfth century, writing seems to have disappeared. Cyprus forms a notable exception: here, by the middle of the eleventh century BC a syllabic script is attested, modelled on the Cyprominoan scripts present on the island since at least the sixteenth century BC. This script was used throughout the history of the island, until the fourth century BC, when it was replaced by the Greek alphabet. Elsewhere, however, no writing on durable material has been found, although some form of recording on perishable materials may have continued for some time.

When we again find written documents, they are written in an entirely different script and present very different characteristics, in content, typology, and diffusion. Just as had been the case for both the Linear B and the Cypriot syllabary, which were modifications of the Linear A script, the Greek alphabet derived from a non-Greek writing system, the North Semitic Phoenician script. The new technique spread quickly, and by the end of the eighth century most areas inhabited by Greeks used some variant of the alphabet.¹⁵ Local variants persisted for a relatively long time, and the Greek traditions concerning further additions and refinements brought to the alphabet by various culture heroes (such as Palamedes, Epicharmus, and Simonides, who was, interestingly enough, also known for having invented mnemotechnics!) are clearly a reflection of this diversity. But what was writing used for? Why was it adopted, what needs did it fulfil? What were its social implications? And what of letter writing?

¹³ Tablets: Mylonas Shear 1998; further administrative synthesis on perishable materials, after which the clay tablets would have been reemployed: Palaima 2004: 170–2. *Contra*: Bennet 2001.

¹⁴ Scribes as members of the elite and performers of the administration: Bennet 2001; as simple accountants: Palaima 2004: 175–7. The comparison with the much better known status of the scribes at Ugarit (Rainey 1968) is instructive.

¹⁵ Excellent survey of scripts and writing around the Mediterranean between 1200 BC and 800 BC in Amadasi 1998. For Greece, Jeffery 1990 (with Johnston's supplement) remains invaluable; very detailed survey of preceding literature in Heubeck 1979: 73–105. See also Bartonek and Buchner 1995; Wachter 1996; Lazzarini 1998; Wirbelauer 2004; J.-P. Wilson 2009; Woodard 2010 (as well as his earlier publications). On Kalapodi, Palme-Koufa 1996; on Kommos, Csapo et al. 2000, and Johnston 2005: 385–6. The finds from the Eretrian colony of Methone (191 graffiti, 25 of which are alphabetical, dating between 730 and 700 BC) have been published in Bessios Tzifopoulos and Kotsonas 2012. For the variants between scripts as a form of expression of local identities, see Luraghi 2010.

2.1. WRITING IN ARCHAIC GREEK SOCIETY: WHO WRITES WHAT, AND WHY?

Why alphabetic writing took off so quickly is still an open question. Letters are not, however, among the earliest preserved documents from the Greek world. The first letters to have come down to us can be dated to c.550 BC, that is, more than two hundred years after the date of the first preserved written documents; for the time being the first extant written texts, apart from single letters which may have been numerals, trademarks, or signs conferring on the object a quasi-magical power, consist of names and ownership inscriptions, dedications, and verses. The emphasis on 'extant' is important: the possibility of written texts on perishable materials such as papyrus or leather cannot be excluded. Still, while keeping in mind that documents on perishable materials might profoundly change the way we think about the early uses of literacy, any sensible discussion has to start from the preserved documents.

The first epigraphical documents (dating to the eighth century) are spontaneous short inscriptions on vases: painted inscriptions, or graffiti, incised after the firing of the vase. The first graffiti on rock appear slightly later. The vast majority of these earliest inscriptions consists in statements of ownership, including names of deities and offerings to a god. But there are also abecedaries, individual names, curses, acclamations, insults, or short texts expressing pride in the writing. (The signature of the person who made or painted the pot is a variant of this: Pitheculasae offers an instance dating to the end of the eighth century.) There are also some longer texts in verse: thus, the famous Cup of Nestor from Pitheculasae, possibly an object to be used in a sympotic context, although it was found in the tomb of a young boy; the similar (albeit very fragmentary) hexametric text on three lines inscribed on a Rhodian cup of the same type, from Eretria in Euboea; the inscription on the Dipylon *oinochoe* from Athens, a prize in a dancing context; and an extremely fragmentary poetic text on a geometric *oinochoe* from Ithaca.¹⁶ There is in all this no suggestion of a centralized use of writing. The contexts of provenance bear this out: these early documents come mainly from necropoleis and sanctuaries, and more generally from public areas.¹⁷

Based on this evidence, two theories concerning the invention of the alphabet have been advanced. Wade-Gery long ago proposed that alphabetic writing (as opposed to consonantal writing) had been invented in order to write hexameter verse, and more specifically the Homeric poems.¹⁸ Such a view relies on the fact that a fairly high proportion of the earliest Greek inscriptions consists of metrical texts; indeed, the argument involves the hypothesis that it was the complexity of

¹⁶ Respectively Jeffery 1990: pl. 47 n. 1 (CEG 454); Johnston and Andreiomenou 1989; Jeffery 1990: pl. 1 n. 1 (CEG 432); and Jeffery 1990: pl. 45 n. 1 (CEG 453). Comprehensive survey of Greek early inscriptions, from the beginnings to c.650 BC, in Powell 1991: 119–80.

¹⁷ Survey of the evidence in Powell 1991: 181–6 (with the corrections of Wirbelauer 2004: 193–4); a thoughtful overview in Thomas 1992: 52–65. See also Jeffery 1990; Lazzarini 1998; Davies 2005; J.-P. Wilson 2009: 549–56. Wirbelauer's interpretation (that these early inscriptions have to do with mobility, because of the mobile character of the support, and so with communication at distance) does not seem to make much sense.

¹⁸ Wade-Gery 1952: 11–14; Robb 1978; Powell 1989; 1991; 2002.

Greek song, with its metrical patterns, that brought the adapter to realize the advantage of a move from a consonantal script to a fully alphabetic one, which also noted the vowels. The alternative theory stresses the fact that the contact between Greeks and Phoenicians must have taken place in a context of exchange and commerce. According to this hypothesis, the Greeks who took up the script from the Phoenicians would have used it, at least in the beginning, in the same way as the Phoenicians did, for commercial purposes.¹⁹ The difficulty here is that there are no extant early commercial documents or letters; the inscriptions making statements of ownership offer only a weak argument in favour of the theory, since they are found on very simple pots and never on more significant, decorated vases, where claiming ownership might have been relevant.²⁰ More compelling is the evidence of graffiti on commercial and storage amphorae, securely attested at Pithecusae (twenty out of a total of forty-six inscriptions): here writing seems to have been used (in a severely abbreviated form) to mark the type of product, or the quantity.²¹

Thus in both cases the argument rests, at least in part, on the hypothetical existence of texts now lost. And indeed, some documents point to the existence of other documents written on perishable material. An inscription such as the one on the so-called 'Nestor's cup', dated to c.725 BC, seems to presuppose the influence of a book script, both because of the alignment of the verses (their *mise en page*) and because of the signs separating metrical units.²² Herodotus (5. 58. 3) affirms that the Ionians 'from ancient times' call the papyrus sheets 'skins' (τὰς βύβλους διφθέρας καλέουσι), since due to the lack of papyrus they formerly used the skins of sheep and goats. This statement is confirmed by a lead letter of c.500 BC, mentioning records on skins, as well as by the proverb, preserved in the *Suda* and in Diogenianus, 'you say things more old-fashioned than skin' (ἀρχαιότερα τῆς διφθέρας λέγεις). Finally, two Hesychian glosses point to the same direction, although specifically linked only to Cyprus;²³ a term transcribed διφθεραλοιφῶν is attested in a Cypriot syllabic inscription, with the sense of 'skin-writer'.²⁴

Bearing all this in mind, what can we say about the type of use that was made of writing, and by whom? In order to recover the uses to which writing was put, we have to rely on the extant documents, but we must also contextualize them in the

¹⁹ Heubeck 1979: 150–2; Lombardo 1988; Harris 1989: 60–1; Millett 1991: 259–60.

²⁰ Buchner, in Bartonek and Buchner 1995: 139.

²¹ See Buchner, in Bartonek and Buchner 1995: 140–1, 144–5, as well as the discussion of the specific examples by Bartonek at 165–76; J.-P. Wilson 2009: 548–9.

²² Heubeck 1979: 115; Cassio 1998: 67–8, with further bibliography.

²³ Ample discussion in Heubeck 1979: 152–4. The letter: Johnston, in Jeffery (1990: 430); Wilson 1997/98 (*SEG* 48, 1012); Dana 2004; below, app. 1, no. 5. In the *Suda* α 4076, the proverb is followed by the following comment: ἡ γὰρ διφθέρα παμπάλαιος, ἐν ᾗ δοκεῖ ὁ Ζεὺς ἀπογράφειν τὰ γενόμενα (compare Diogenianus, v. 1, cent. 3, 2, in Leutsch-Schneidewin, *Corpus paroemiographorum Graecorum*; slightly different version in Diogenianus v. 1, cent. 4, 95a). Hesychian glosses: Hesych. α 2842 ἀλειπτῆριον· γραφεῖον. Κύπριοι ('paint-brush: pencil, the Cypriots'); δ 1992 διφθεραλοιφός· γραμματοδιδάσκαλος παρὰ Κυπρίους ('anoinker of skins: teacher, among the Cypriots').

²⁴ For διφθεραλοιφῶν see Masson, *ICS*, no. 143 (epitaph of a schoolmaster, fifth or fourth century BC); and for the second element see the bronze tablet of Idalion dated c.470–50 BC, Masson, *ICS*, no. 217. 26 ἰδὲ τὰ(ν) δάλτον τὰ(ν)δε τὰ φέπια τὰδε ἰναλαλισμένα<(ν) ('and this tablet, written with these words'), with p. 243 (my thanks to L. Holford-Strevens for this reference).

society that used them to surmise what their possible functions were.²⁵ This implies accepting the possibility of a fairly high differentiation in the use of writing, depending on the social and socio-economic structures in place in the various areas of the Greek world; it also implies distinguishing between the type of use the adapter may have had in mind, and the uses to which the Greeks immediately put the new craft; it is the latter that interests us. In this context, it is worth bearing in mind that the dichotomy which scholars have posited between ‘merchants’ on the one hand and ‘aristocrats’ interested in poetry on the other may have been pushed too far. It is likely that the adapter of the alphabet was involved in trade—he must have been in close contact with Phoenicians, and presumably for some time, in order to realize what could be done with their script; it is therefore indeed likely that he may have wanted to put it to the same use as the Phoenicians. As Willi has recently pointed out, the Phoenicians appear to have used writing mainly for dedications in sanctuaries, and in a lesser measure for ownership inscriptions and funerary inscriptions; the situation in the Greek world is very similar (the prominence of dedications is even more striking if we consider that many ownership-inscriptions can be interpreted as—or double up as—votive inscriptions).²⁶ Writing will have increased the prestige of dedications to the gods, made initially by those traders who had entered into contact with the Phoenicians, and then by others. But long-distance traders were part of what we might call an ‘aristocracy’; when not travelling, they will have spent some time dining together in what would later be called a symposion, or dancing, and they may have used their recently learned skill in such contexts to inscribe jocose texts such as Nestor’s cup, while also inscribing marks on trade- and storage-amphoras, making dedications in local or Panhellenic sanctuaries, and possibly registering items on perishable materials.²⁷

Let us now extend the chronological range and pay attention to location. The epigraphical material of the period from the eighth to the early fifth century offers a rich and varied picture: the media change, in the sense that besides inscriptions on ceramic there are now numerous texts inscribed on stone, on the walls of temples for instance, or on statues. Modifications in the relation between writing and the spoken word are also observable. Early writing appears to have been used in service of the spoken word: most of the early texts are statements meant to be read aloud.²⁸ However, from the mid-sixth century at the latest, the forms taken

²⁵ This is why, although it is possible that a complete copy of Homer was written down, and although it is possible that the desire to write poetry may have exerted an influence on the change from a consonantal to a fully alphabetic script, it nonetheless does not make sense to assume that writing down the epos was the driving force behind the diffusion of writing: it is difficult to figure out the uses made of it (a point forcefully argued by Cassio 1998: 75–82).

²⁶ Willi 2005, giving as instances of how the Greeks might have got in contact with this practice the dedications of a bronze horse blinker in the Heraion of Samos and of a horse frontlet in the Daphnephorion of Eretria, both bearing the same Aramaic inscription; and stressing that the first Greek writers cannot have expected other fellow-Greeks to understand their writing, a situation that makes of gods the ideal readers. See also Hall 2002: 94–6.

²⁷ This ‘soft’ version of the commercial origin of the alphabet is argued in detail in Lombardo 1988.

²⁸ See Thomas 1992: 62 and 73; Pucci 1988; Svenbro 1993: 26–43 and 44–63, with the remarks of Porciani 1997: 160–2; Calame 1993; Magini 1998: 23–4; and for a somewhat different take on the ‘speaking objects’, Carraro 2007.

by funerary and dedicatory inscriptions change: the frequency of first-person, 'egocentric' inscriptions ('I am the cup of Nestor') diminishes, while third-person inscriptions become more and more frequent, implying possibly that by now writing can be used in an impersonal way, as a self-standing instrument, a 'third person notice of information'.²⁹ Much of this early writing may have had a symbolic power, rather than an informative purpose; it has been argued that this remained the case in a large measure also in the classical and Hellenistic period.³⁰ Finally, the contexts change as well, including now the everyday private, the sacred, and the monumental/public. Thus the period between the early seventh century to the early fifth century sees, in various degrees of intensity and in different places, the monumental inscription of laws and decrees (at Gortyna or Dreros in Crete, at Tiryns in the Argolid, in Chios); archival uses of writing (the 'contract' of Spensithios in Crete, stating that he shall be responsible for recording for the polis); commercial uses of writing (the maritime loans, if that is what they are, from Corcyra; contracts and letters on lead by *emporoi*); uses related to the prestige of writing (under this heading go most vase-inscriptions, whether signatures of artists or jocose mottoes, descriptive labels, signs alluding to writing, all having at the same time a decorative function that should not be forgotten); dedications representing monumental elite statements, such as the inscriptions on the bases of *kouroi* and *korai*, usually in verse, as well as small dedications, on which writing itself may be the distinctive element; funerary inscriptions, again mainly in verse (widespread throughout the Greek world); and, from the mid-fifth century, lists and catalogues.³¹

In a ground-breaking paper, Stoddart and Whitley argued that it was possible to identify two models for the contexts and uses of writing in the archaic Greek world.³² In the first, best exemplified by Attica, personal inscriptions, such as onomastic graffiti, dipinti on pots, dedications, and inscriptions on tombstones by far outweigh official inscriptions such as laws, regulations, or decrees. This would suggest a relatively widespread literacy. The other model is the Cretan one: there, the earliest inscriptions are mainly official documents on stone, such as laws, while personal inscriptions are comparatively rare.³³ Such a situation they interpreted as

²⁹ Thomas 1992: 63–4. An instance of writing taking centre-stage is offered by a law from Olympia dated to c.525–500 BC concerning the behaviour of the *theoroi* (Minon 2007, no. 4 = van Effenterre and Ruzé 1994–5, no. 109 = *I.v.O.* 7): the regulations are followed by a clause, 'but if anyone judges against the writing, the judgement should be void' (*αἱ δὲ τις πὰρ τὸ γράφος δικάδοι, ἀτελὲς κ'εῖε ἂ δίκαια*, l. 2): now that it has been written down, the regulation is referred to as 'the writing'; in the next paragraph, the possibility of making changes in the regulations is discussed, and the regulations are referred to as writings (*τὸν δὲ κα γραφένον* ..., l. 3). The change is also examined, in another perspective, by Day 2010: 112–16; Stehle 1997: 311–16 offers a splendid discussion, focused on the communicative situation.

³⁰ Linders 1992.

³¹ The searchable site Poinikastas <<http://poinikastas.csad.ox.ac.uk/>>, based on the work of Anne Jeffery, makes it possible to visualize the differences in document type, provenance, type of support, and archaeological context. Focus on location and support is at the centre of Davies 2005.

³² Stoddart and Whitley 1988. See further Whitley 1997 and, for a wider contextualization, Whitley 2001: 128–33.

³³ Note, however, that in their calculations, Stoddard and Whitley 1988 (as also Whitley 1997) omitted to look for Cretans abroad: the graffiti of Cretans mercenaries c.450 BC on the Memnonion at Abydos are evidence of personal literacy. See Chaniotis, in *SEG* 47, 1377.

pointing to a rarefied literacy, and to an elite use of writing, made to impress symbolically, rather than to offer a democratic means of control. Most regions of the Greek world, and in particular Euboea, Corinth, the Argolid, Laconia, and possibly Boeotia seemed to follow the Attic pattern, while the situation in Elis appeared to be closer to the Cretan one.³⁴ New discoveries have modified the picture: the finds from Kommos for instance have more than trebled the number of graffiti from Crete.³⁵ But the more detailed analysis proposed ten years later by Whitley, taking into account the new finds from Crete (then still unpublished), reached very similar conclusions.³⁶ According to Whitley, in Attica writing would have been relatively widespread, used by craftsmen, but also by aristocrats competing for prestige, *τιμῇ*; in Crete, writing remained the preserve of a small, restricted group. An alternative explanation of the difference between the two areas, based not on differences in the degree of literacy, but rather on 'epigraphic habit', the type of use made of writing, has been advanced by Chaniotis: the Cretans tended to make a public use of writing, while the epigraphic habit of archaic Athens would have been predominantly private and individual.³⁷ Further refinements should be brought to bear on the model: for instance, it has recently been shown that the legal texts publicly displayed on temple walls in Crete rely (exception made for the earliest group of texts) on archival documents; the early presence of archives need not however be interpreted as proof of widespread literacy, but rather as pointing to the existence of a 'legal literacy'.³⁸ The two explanations actually can be meaningfully combined; the important point here is that even within Greece, different groups made very different uses of writing: this applies also, as we shall see, to letter writing.

Besides the epigraphical evidence, it is important to survey the literary evidence: not so much for what it explicitly says about the uses of writing, as for what it betrays in respect to the diffusion and the uses of literacy. As suggested above, the orderly arrangement of the letters on the 'Cup of Nestor' seems to imply the existence of a book-script; the first redactions of the epic poems cannot have been much later than the seventh century, and a written support has also been hypothesized for the composition of Greek melic poetry. Similarly, we hear that around the mid-sixth century Heraclitus wrote a book in prose, which he

³⁴ Hall 1997: 145.

³⁵ Thus the tables in Stoddart and Whitley 1988: 763–4 need adjustments, as do also the otherwise more detailed tables offered in Whitley 1997: 641 (Attica); but even with the adjustments, the difference between the two areas remains evident. See now also J.-P. Wilson 2009: 559–61.

³⁶ Statistics: for at the period 750–480, Whitley listed for Attica 758 dipinti, 240 graffiti, 82 inscribed gravestones, 395 dedications, but only 8 legal texts, all relatively late in date; for the same period, Sparta offers 79 dedications, no graffiti, no dipinti, 1 inscribed tombstone, and no laws; Crete has 19 dedications (of which 13 on armours), 13 graffiti, no dipinti, 5 tombstones, but 38 laws! The more than 50 graffiti presumably by made by shepherds around 500 bc, found by Langdon on a hill in the area of Vari in Attica (e.g. Langdon 2005), and comprising an abecedarium, but also short texts, further reinforce the picture.

³⁷ Chaniotis, in *SEG* 47, 1997, no. 1377, for whom the internal references in Cretan laws to the written text imply that the texts were meant for reference, rather than as monuments.

³⁸ Faraguna 2011 (an important discussion, touching on other regions of Greece, besides Crete); distinction between the earliest group of Cretan texts and the others in Faraguna 2011: 9 and 12, argued also on the basis of the layout (in a long continuous line for the earliest group, in columns recalling the layout of a book-roll for the later texts—see on this also above, n. 22).

deposited in the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, thus dedicating it to the goddess (Diog. Laert. 9. 6); and ancient tradition dates the first libraries, owned by the tyrants Pisistratus and Polycrates, to the second half of the sixth century (Athen. 1. 3A). In all these instances, writing functions mainly as a means of preserving records and gaining prestige by specialized groups, such as rhapsodic guilds, or exceptional individuals, such as the tyrants; it may also have served as an aid to composition, for instance in the case of lyric poetry; but it still has no role, or only a very restricted one, in the communication of the work itself.³⁹

Can this situation be used to support the idea of the existence of 'letters', of messages addressed to an absent person, and written on a perishable support? While letters are not securely attested until c.550 BC, Rösler has argued that traces of poetic epistolography can be found already in Archilochus, and that such a form of poetic communication was well established by the time of Alcaeus.⁴⁰ For Archilochus, Rösler pointed at the famous epode 185 W. (*ἐρέω τιν' ὕμιν αἶνον, ὦ Κηρυκίδη, ἀχνημένῃ σκυτάλῃ*): the poem opens on an act of communication ('I shall tell you a story'), followed by an apostrophe to a 'son of heralds' (Kerykides, a comic patronymic), and by a problematic 'sorrowful message-stick'.⁴¹ Whatever specific interpretation we may want to give of the opening and of the *ainos* that followed it, clearly there is here a play on official communication. However, it is also evident that this need not be an official *written* communication (actually is hardly likely to be, unless we insist that the *skytale* necessarily implies a written message)—and the poem was certainly meant for oral communication. Much less clear seems to me the case of Archilochus fr. 89 W., also considered by Rösler as an instance of poetic epistle, because of the distance between the 'speaking I' and the addressee of l. 29, Erxies.⁴² The pragmatic situation in the poem is indeed that of long-distance communication; but to move from this to a conception of the poem as a real letter sent (in writing, as supposed by Lasserre-Bonnard, or also orally) to Erxies in a situation of danger seems an unwarranted leap.

As for Alcaeus, two poems, fr. 401B V. (the 'shield' poem) and fr. 130b V. (a poem composed from the exile) have been interpreted as 'poetic epistles'.⁴³ A passage of Herodotus (5. 95) shows that at any rate in the fifth century BC fr. 401B V. was indeed considered a message, written and then sent by Alcaeus to Mytilene, to inform Alcaeus' *hetairos* Melanippus of the events in Sigeum; Strabo (13. 1. 38), after explaining that in the poem Alcaeus addressed a herald, asking him to bring the news to those at home, proceeds to quote two badly corrupted verses: 'Alcaeus is safe (*Ἀλκαῖος σάος*), but the Athenians hung up (his armour? the shield that was his protection?) in the holy temple of grey-eyed Athena' (trans. Campbell, fr. 428a). Indeed, Alcaeus is here spoken of in the third person, as

³⁹ Rösler 1980: 45–56.

⁴⁰ Rösler 1980: 272.

⁴¹ Problematic, for both textual and semantic reasons. Textual: we may have here a dative, or a nominative: if a dative, as West, then we might imagine the speaker holding a (metaphorically sad) baton and delivering his message; if a nominative, it may refer to the Kerykides, and qualify the types of messages the 'son of heralds' tends to spread, or to the speaking voice, which would be presenting itself as a sorrowful messenger. Semantic: we do not know what exactly *skytale* means: baton giving the authority of official messenger to its carrier; baton bearing incisions, and functioning as aide-memoire for the messenger; message (at any rate not encrypted) written on leather and rolled around a stick, as in later Spartan use. See West 1988 for discussion; and below, 322, n. 66.

⁴² Rösler 1980: 274; cf. Lasserre-Bonnard 1958: 26.

⁴³ Rösler 1980: 272–85.

would be the case with a message. As for fr. 130b V. (= 130b Campbell), it opens with a first-person speaker who is in exile, and is addressing a friend named Agesilaidas. The most likely scenario is to think of a mixture of ocular and imaginary deixis, with either a present 'Alcaeus' addressing an imaginary Agesilaidas, or an absent 'Alcaeus' (to be imagined by the audience) addressing, through the speaker who transmits the message, an Agesilaidas, present and visible to the members of the *hetairia*. In this second case, it would be possible to speak of an 'epistle'.⁴⁴ Even if this were accepted, however (and it is not clear that the apostrophe and the situation described in Alcaeus fr. 130b V. can be interpreted along these lines), these 'poetic epistles' need not imply actual letter writing; they rather reflect the obvious fact that individuals who for some reason had to spend time away from their home will, through travellers, merchants, or soldiers, have sent messages home telling of their situation.⁴⁵

Pursuing a different approach, Stehle has made a case for an interpretation of some of Sappho's poems (mainly Sappho 31 V., but also 96 V., 22 V., and 94 V.) as detached from the performance context, and consciously exploiting writing as a means to preserve communication in the face of separation. For Stehle, the separation of speaker and singer in these poems means that the poems were written to be sung by another person, the addressee, to herself, thus setting up a communication between two otherwise separated figures; writing offered Sappho a way of 'creating a fictional 'I' not recuperable by the singer and using it to simulate communication'.⁴⁶ This is very different from what happens in Archilochus' and Alcaeus' poems: in their poems, meant for performance, markers of epistolarity are present; but in Sappho, no such markers are to be found, so that independently of whether one is inclined to accept Stehle's interpretation, Sappho's poems cannot be taken to imply anything in connection with letter writing.

The notion of apposing a *sphragis*, a seal, to one's songs—or writings—is also an important development, and in this case its reflection on letter writing is evident: a letter is a written message by a specific individual, aimed at another specific individual or group and at no other persons, conveying the exact words of the sender, without any alterations introduced by the messenger. But for the recipient to be certain that the message indeed comes from the stated sender, in a situation where the handwriting cannot give a real clue, a sign is needed; and indeed, either documentary letters were sealed with an imprint recognizable by the addressee, or a 'sign' was written into the text, a reference to something known only to sender and addressee.⁴⁷ A *sphragis* is what gives authority to the transmitted message. The apposition of a 'seal' in a poetic text is first explicitly stated in the poetry of

⁴⁴ Rösler 1980: 273–85. Of course in later (re)performances the deictic referents would have become imaginary—see Edmunds 2008: 82–4 for the continuum along which 'historical I' and 'generic I' are situated.

⁴⁵ D'Alessio 2004: 279–80 stresses that the deictic results of mediated communication may find expression equally in oral and written mediated communication; a similar point had been made by Calame 1995: 52–6, and 74 n. 35. See the discussion of the Pindaric 'poetic epistles' (*Pythian* 2 and 3, and *Isthmian* 2) in Gibson and Morrison 2007: 4–7; and for a detailed discussion of *Pythian* 3, Young 1983 (esp. 31–4).

⁴⁶ Stehle 1997: 288–311 (311 for the quote), and 314–15 for 'epigraphic' communication (discussed below, 57 and n.128).

⁴⁷ See Parsons 1980 for instances in papyrus letters.

Theognis;⁴⁸ but the *sphragis* may have already existed in the seventh century, as one of the constituent parts of the citharodic *nomos*.⁴⁹ The next occasion when the practice is recognizable is in the sayings of Phocylides and Demodocus, and in the elegiacs inscribed on herms by the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus: all three inserted their own name just before the saying (Phocylides and Demodocus right at the beginning of the elegiac distich; in the case of the texts on the herms, the hexameter was probably used to indicate the geographical distance, while the name of Hipparchus and the proverb were located in the pentameter).⁵⁰

On the whole, the notion of a ‘seal’ affixed to poetic or prose texts may be seen as closely connected to the early uses of writing in epigraphical contexts: for even a cursory look at early dedications (or epitaphs) or at the earliest potters’ inscriptions on the eighth-century sherds from Pithecusae shows that the mark of the individual affirming ownership or (extraordinary) craftsmanship was a constitutive part of the first uses of writing. The practice by potters of signing their vases or by sculptors of asserting their craftsmanship is also well attested in the seventh and sixth century.⁵¹ Note also the extraordinary seal on an island gem, a scarab from Aegina bearing the inscription ‘I am the sign of Thersis, do not open me’ (Θέρσιός | ἐμὶ σᾶμα | μέ με ἄν | οἶγε).⁵² What makes this text special is the injunction ‘not to open’ whatever it was that was sealed with it: sealing here is not just a statement of ownership, it also conveys privacy. All these examples show that by the sixth century the notion of permanency in connection with writing had developed in such a way as to render appealing the notion of expressing ownership and stability within poetic compositions through the use of a *sphragis*. Letter writing may have played a role in this: after all, letters are folded—and ‘sealed’. But its role (and the role of writing itself) need not have been particularly important, and for more than one reason: first, the appending of one’s own name (and, in commerce, the adding of marks indicating content and ownership, as well as of a seal, for instance on amphorae) had been a feature of writing from the earliest beginnings; second, the seal functions perfectly well in an oral context, where, besides the authority, it emphasizes (as in the transmission of an oral message) the distance of the author.⁵³

⁴⁸ Theogn. 19–38, probably forming a unit, opens with: ‘Cyrnus, let a seal lie upon these verses for me as I communicate poetic wisdom—they will never be stolen without detection, nor will anyone accept a worse line when a good one is at hand. But everyone will speak thus: “These are the verses of Theognis of Megara”’ (vv. 19–23: Κύρνη, σοφίζομένω μὲν ἐμοὶ σφρηγὶς ἐπικείσθω | τοῖσδ’ ἔπεισιν—λήσει δ’ οὐποτε κλεπτόμενα, | οὐδέ τις ἀλλάξει κάκιον τοῦσθλοῦ παρεόντος, | ὦδε δὲ πᾶς τις ἐρεῖ· Θεογνιδὸς ἐστὶν ἔπη | τοῦ Μεγαρέως). The discussion on what exactly that seal might have been, and what it may have meant, is still open; cf. Calame 1995: 25–6, 49–50; Porciani 1997: 51; Fain 2006; Hubbard 2007, whose translation I cite.

⁴⁹ See Kranz 1961: 16–17 and 27–8, mentioning the *sphragis* at the end of Timotheos’ *nomos*, but reporting the practice back to the songs of Alcman; note also the use of the *sphragis* in Critias, fr. 3 G.-P. = 5 W.², and Noussia-Fantuzzi 2010: 478–9 on Solon fr. 30 G.-P. = 36.20 W.² (20, ἐγραψα).

⁵⁰ Kranz 1961: 23; Hubbard 2007: 203–4. Instances and discussion of the early use of a *sphragis* in prose works (the proem of Alcmaeon of Croton, D.-K. 24 B1, the reconstructed ones of Heraclitus and Ion of Chios, that of Democritus, D.-K. 68 B 299, and others) in Porciani 1997: 47–53.

⁵¹ References in Kranz 1961: 20.

⁵² Agate scarab from Aegina, now in Breslau, Boardman 1968: 73–4 and fig. 2, no. 176 (IG iv 179; SEG 40, 301).

⁵³ For the ‘entrance’ of commercial notions into the poetic vocabulary of the sixth century cf. Svenbro 1984: 155–79; but also the more sceptical view of Ford 2002: 132–9. For the distance

It thus seems fairly certain that messages will have been sent when needed, sometimes in writing, but mainly orally through messengers (someone would anyway have had to transport the writing); and that some of these messages, both the oral and the written ones, will have been ‘sealed’, that is, marked with a clearly recognizable sign of origin; the notion of communicating at a distance was certainly not unknown in archaic Greece. However, there is no basis either in the epigraphical material or in the literary documentation for seeing in long-distance communication the earliest or the main use of writing, no matter whether that communication was by individuals or by communities.

2.2. THE EARLIEST LETTERS

Let us now focus on the earliest written messages. In what follows, I propose to trace the formation of a Greek epistolary format, from the earliest written messages to the form defined by the epistolary treatises as standard, and current from the end of the fourth century BC onwards. I hope to show how messages that were initially informal communications couched in writing evolved towards a fixed form with stable rules, perceived as such.⁵⁴ For this it is necessary to trace the changes in the enunciation, as well as in the technical vocabulary, within the corpus formed by the early letters; but in order to follow the letters’ progress towards an ‘epistolary specificity’, I shall also attempt to situate their enunciation and language against that of a related set of documents, the *defixiones*, or curses. These too may take the form of a message to the gods of the Underworld (some curses explicitly present themselves as letters); moreover, the material support on which they are written is also the same as that of most early letters.

2.2.1. Epistolary Formulae and Deictics: The Development of the Epistolary Genre

From the fourth century onwards, a letter is a piece of writing introduced by a prescript containing a greeting formula (the most common being *ὁ δέϊνος τῷ δέϊνι χαίρειν*), followed by a message in the first person, and ending with a concluding wish, such as *erroso/erroshe* (‘Farewell’) or similar.⁵⁵ The fact that the greeting formula remained in use almost unchanged for some 700 years, even if already by

introduced by the seal, and the fact that its presence in writing is simply a reflection of its functionality in an oral context, Porciani 1997: 55. For oral messages, see below, ch. 4.

⁵⁴ On the relationship of oral and written text see Day 2010: 22–3, discussing Bakker 1993: 16. Letters are indeed substitutes for speech, but are mainly concerned with the transmission of the message rather than with its preservation (as in the case of epigrams); still, the reading of a letter is a reactivation of the oral message (see also Head 2009).

⁵⁵ In its basic structure, the letter can be compared to a personal encounter: the prescript corresponds to the initial greeting, the body of the letter is the conversation, the concluding wish marks the separation (Koskeniemi 1956: 155). Cugusi 1983: 28–30 offers a collection of passages of ancient authors listing the rules concerning the structure of the letter.

the first century AD the construction of the greeting with the infinitive *χαίρειν* was not understood and was felt to be problematic by the grammarians, shows how strongly marked by tradition letter writing was.⁵⁶ But for the earlier period, things are not so simple. Some archaic and early classical literary texts, such as the poem of Alcaeus concerning his shield or some Pindaric epinicians, were understood (or could be understood and conceptualized) as letters. These texts may have contributed to shape what will become the accepted format of a letter; but they are far from representing 'standard' letters.

Besides literary texts presenting themselves as messages, or containing embedded letters, there are quite a few documents of the archaic and early classical period that clearly constitute letters, attempts at written communication over a long distance. In this area our knowledge has changed dramatically in the past thirty years. Up to 1976, the year in which the most famous of these letters, found at Berezan in the Black Sea, was published, only a handful of documentary letters dating to before 350 BC were known.⁵⁷ Studies of the form of the ancient Greek letter had thus to rely on letters embedded in literary works; on the so-called 'letter of Darius to Gadatas', a Greek version of a royal letter (originally written in Aramaic?) sent by Darius I to his servant (the Greek has *δοῦλος*, 'slave') Gadatas, an important regional administrator (possibly a satrap, or the steward of a satrapal or royal *paradeisos*); and on an abundant papyrological documentation that, however, did not go back in time before the third century BC. Embedded letters will be discussed in the next chapters; as for the 'letter to Gadatas', the document we have was actually engraved in the second century AD, and while it may well be a copy of an earlier document, not enough is known of its transmission to justify making use of it for a study of the formal evolution of Greek letter writing.⁵⁸ But since 1976 the situation has changed: the number of documentary letters, on lead or on ceramic sherds, has more than trebled. The corpus of archaic and classical documentary letters now reaches forty-two, and it is likely that more will come to light. These letters come from all over the Greek world: eight are from Attica (four on ceramic sherds, four on lead) and two (on lead) from Chalkidike, while the remaining letters have been found in peripheral areas of the Greek world: the Black Sea region, Sicily, and the area around the Gulf of Massalia. Nine letters

⁵⁶ Koskeniemi 1956: 157; see Gerhard 1904 and Koskeniemi 1956: 41–2 for the problems with the prescript felt by Dionysius and Apollonius Dyscolus; translation and detailed commentary of Apollonius *On Syntax* 3. 63–77 (329–41 Uhlig) in Lallot 1997: i, 229–33 and ii, nn. 151–86.

⁵⁷ Parsons 1980: 13 counted three (nos. 1, 12, and 39 of the list given in appendix 1); and indeed, the other instances then known (25; 26; 30; 31; the four graffiti from the Athenian agora, 35–8; 40) were all either not fully published, or fragmentary, or not typical.

⁵⁸ The literature on the document (*I. Magnesia* 115; M.–L., no. 12) is extensive. Most scholars consider it authentic: see e.g. Porciani 1997: 25–33, Fried 2004: 108–119, Lane-Fox 2006, Tuplin 2009, Muir 2009: 84 ('The earliest genuine piece of state correspondence we have from the Greek world'), Lombardi 2010, as well as Briant 1996); but a strong case against the authenticity has been made by Briant (2003), who argues that the personnel of the temple of Apollo at Magnesia forged the document; see also Gauger 2000: 205–11; Grabbe 2004: 116–17. Importantly, even those who argue for the authenticity add qualifications. Thus, Porciani 1997: 32 considers it as a Greek witness of *Persian* epistolography; Fried 2004: 116 concludes: 'Rather than assuming that it is a literal translation of an Aramaic or Persian original, I think that it may represent the Apollo priests' tradition of Darius's letter to Gadatas inscribed "as it must have been"'; Lane-Fox 2006 leaves open the possibility of insertions and changes; and Tuplin 2009 notes that the concept of 'authenticity' must in this case be elastic.

(seven on lead, two on ceramic fragments) come from the latter area, while the Black Sea region has yielded twenty-two documents, fourteen on lead, the rest incised on ceramic sherds.⁵⁹ Most of these documents refer to commercial transactions, some others concern smaller exchanges, and a few are personal communications.⁶⁰

In the following discussion I shall not distinguish sharply between letters written on lead and letters written on potsherds. It is true that the differences between the two types of support have an impact on the message itself and its meaning. Thus, lead may be more or less available, depending on the area one lives in;⁶¹ it can be easily stored, but it can also be reused;⁶² it can be rolled up, making it possible to send a 'closed', sealed message, with the names of sender and addressee usually written on the outside; and it offers a better surface than a potsherd for a longish or complex message meant for long-distance transmission. Conversely, pottery is cheap (almost any sherd could do) and can be found almost anywhere; but it is not that easy to store, so it would probably have been thrown away after it had served its purpose; it is heavier and more cumbersome, thus less convenient for sending a message over a longish distance; more importantly, a graffito or dipinto on ceramic cannot be sealed. These differences affect not so much the writing in itself as the type of messages sent and the distance at which they are sent: for communication with one's own slaves or dependants, or from the polis to the *chora*, a ceramic fragment would probably serve most needs; lead seems to have been employed for longer distances, for complex affairs, or in specific situations (such as in the case of the letter of Lesis from Athens, no. 41: he was working in a forge and so lead may have been easier to obtain than ceramic; and he probably would not have wanted the content of his message to reach his master). Apart from these differences, from the point of view of the enunciative markers the two sets are comparable; tackling them together will give us a more rounded picture of the uses of writing for personal communication in the archaic and classical period.

⁵⁹ List in appendix 1, with main bibliography on each document; surveys in Jordan 2003*b*, and most recently in Eidinow and Taylor 2010, who view letters mainly as responses to situations of crisis. It should be noted that some of the documents classified as letters by Dana 2007 (and before her by Vinogradov 1998) stretch the limit of what one is willing to accept as letter (the 'letter' from Sicily, appendix 1, no. 32, is also problematic in this respect); moreover, some of the documents included in Dana 2007 have not yet been published—they may turn out not to be letters. When in doubt I have tended to be inclusive.

⁶⁰ Excellent discussion of the use of letters, and writing more generally, in the world of long-trading merchants in the archaic and classical period, in Lombardo 1988. I know of only one official letter on lead, dated to Hellenistic or imperial times, from Acra (listed at the end of appendix 1).

⁶¹ See Kroll 1977: 94–5 n. 29 for references to ancient and modern sources on the use of lead, and for indications as to the price of lead in various areas of Greece at different times; a cost of 2 to 7 drachmas per talent (c.25 kg) of lead implies a very low cost for the single sheet of lead (Kroll estimates that the 650 third-century tablets from the Agora and Kerameikos may as a group, in terms of the material used, have cost between 1 and 2 drachmas).

⁶² This means that we mostly have letters that did not reach their addressee—for otherwise, after having served its purpose, the lead would have been reused: Jordan 2000: 92–3 and n. 6, citing Vinogradov 1971: 95–6. The remark of Bravo 1974: 113–16, that we do not find lead letters after the fourth century BC because by then papyrus had become more affordable while being at the same time easier to handle, does not really affect Vinogradov's argument, notwithstanding what Jordan seems to imply. On the reuse and storage of lead documents see also Kroll 1977: 94–5.

Let us start with the letters from the Black Sea. The most famous and probably the most ancient Greek documentary letter is a text inscribed on a piece of lead coming from Berezan (appendix 1, no. 1), dated between 550 and 500 BC. It has on the outside the names of both sender and addressees (a main addressee, and a second one to whom the first one should communicate the message), as well as a reference to the object itself, designed as ‘*molibdion*’, piece of lead: *Ἀχιλλοδώρῳ τὸ μολί- | βδιον παρὰ τὸν παῖδα | κᾶναξαγόρην*), ‘Achillodoros’ piece of lead, to his son and Anaxagoras’.⁶³ The use of *μολίβδιον* may mean that Achillodoros did not know of a word for ‘letter’; but it should be noted that even when a specific term became available, letters could be referred to with words denoting the type of material used.⁶⁴ As for the message itself, it opens with an address in the vocative, followed by a text in which the writer speaks of himself constantly in the third person (*ὦ Πρωταγόρη, ὁ πατήρ τοι ἐπιστέλλει. ἀδικεῖται | ὑπὸ Ματάσους, κτλ.*); the second person singular is used for the addressee, already in the first sentence, which fulfils the role of a prescript.⁶⁵ Trapp aptly remarks that ‘this perhaps reflects a feeling that sending a message by letter is like sending one via a living messenger, who would naturally report the sender’s wishes thus’; he also advances an alternative, in his opinion less likely explanation, namely that the hidden first-person speaker may be the scribe who wrote the message for Achillodoros, and who would naturally speak of Achillodoros in the third person.⁶⁶ A further possibility would be to imagine that the letter speaks by itself, like the archaic inscriptions on ‘speaking objects’ studied by Svenbro.⁶⁷ On the whole, the first interpretation (words of the messenger) seems the most likely. The letter reports a complicated affair concerning the seizure of goods—in fact, Achillodoros, the sender, is at risk of being himself seized as a slave by a certain Matasys in a procedure known as *συλᾶν*, by which Matasys, whose property (slaves and houses) has been illegally taken by Anaxagoras, seizes in compensation Achillodoros himself and the goods, both supposedly belonging to Anaxagoras. Kept throughout in the present tense, that is, written from Achillodoros’ temporal perspective (later, letter writers will commonly use the so-called ‘epistolary past’, i.e. they will

⁶³ Bravo 1974: 175 and Trapp 2003: 198 both note that the initial predicative position of the genitive possessive conveys ownership rather than authorship; the point is reinforced by the syntax (*παρὰ* and not *τὸ παρὰ*) and by the lack of sandhi (the non-conversion of the final *ν* of *μολίβδιον* into *μ*, expected before a *π*), which implies a fractional pause between the two terms. The piece of lead was to remain in the family, for further reuse.

⁶⁴ Trapp 2003: 198; see above, 15–16. This applies also to other categories of written documents: for instance, in the very few instances in which the text of a curse refers to itself, it does so as ‘lead’, Eidinow and Taylor 2010: 43 n. 55. The text of a decree ‘is’ the stele on which it is written.

⁶⁵ Note the use of *ἐπιστέλλω* (l. 1 and 9) in a letter, to mean ‘enjoin’. It is interesting to contrast the address in vocative here (and in some other documentary letters) with Sykutris’ statement (1931: 188) that in a literary text addressed to a person one finds the addressee’s name in the vocative in the first sentence (he cites Isocrates’ *Philip* as an instance), ‘but that is not done in a letter’ (‘das findet sich aber in einem Brief nicht’). Bravo 1974: 175–6 offers a close analysis of the syntax of the letter, which he sees as poised between direct and indirect speech.

⁶⁶ Trapp 2003: 196–7. The suggested comparison with the letters in Herodotus, however, does not work, because after the introductory formula in the third person the Herodotean letters present an enunciative shift to the first person: see below.

⁶⁷ Wilson 1997–8: 37; Svenbro 1993. The question of ‘who wrote’ (as distinct from ‘who is sending’ and ‘who is speaking’) will be addressed at the end of the survey.

write the message from the point of view of the addressee), the letter offers an interesting example of dramatization, with a ‘speech within the speech’: for in explaining the situation, Achillodoros quotes the very words with which Matasys justifies his act of appropriation. There is no closing formula.

Another letter from Berezan (appendix 1, no. 2, dated to c.540–535 BC) begins *παρά* [- -]: the names of either sender or addressee must have followed directly. This is a fascinating document, but extremely fragmentary: items should be sent and given back, a slave-girl has to be sent to the addressee by a certain Melas, speed is important, but it is difficult to put all this together. While the wording of the prescript is uncertain (a *verbum dicendi* is present, but its interpretation is disputed), it is at least fairly clear that the body of the letter was expressed by the sender in the first person (cf. l. 2, *θέλωμι*); the end is lost. One further interesting feature of this letter is that, unlike the previous one, it is written boustrophedon. In general, there does not seem to be much uniformity in the writing styles of the lead letters from this area, something that would point to individuals incising their message themselves (or asking someone else, but not necessarily a professional, to do so). In this specific case, the editor, Vinogradov, comments that the letter is written carefully and in beautiful letters, by a hand he considers as accustomed to writing on stone.⁶⁸

An important change in the enunciative posture appears in a long letter also coming from the Black Sea area (appendix 1, no. 5), and dated to c.500 BC, which bears on topics very close to Achillodoros’ letter. The letter has on the outside the names of sender (nominative) and addressee (dative), while inside the order is reversed (addressee first and then sender, ‘To Leanax, Apatorios’). Neither outside nor inside is there any trace of a *verbum dicendi* or of a greeting. This form of address presupposes a discourse in the third person, but except for the prescript the letter is entirely written in the first person and remarkably articulated. We are here once again (as with Achillodoros and Matasys) in the world of long-distance traders; here too, Apatorios writes to Leanax because his goods have been seized (*σισύλημαι*) by Herakleides son of Eotheris; a certain Menon, who must be somehow related to Leanax (possibly one of his agents), has, however, come in his help; Menon now says that if Leanax could send to Herakleides and Thathaies (or possibly Thathaie) the records (*διφθέρια*), his (Apatorios’) goods could be saved. Clearly all these people know each other; and clearly not only do they keep in touch, whenever necessary, by sending lead letters, they also have registers. Even more interesting is the fact that here the written record seems to count for more than the oral evidence of a witness.⁶⁹ Here too, there is no closing formula.

Another early letter on lead, dated to 530–510 BC and coming from ancient Phanagoria (appendix 1, no. 4), shows that often the written text served only to support the authority of a message transmitted orally: neither sender nor addressee are mentioned, although a first person plural towards the end of the

⁶⁸ Vinogradov 1998: 154. Bravo 2007: 58–66 now suggests that this is not a letter, but an Orphic text meant for the funeral of a female initiate; Chaniotis, *SEG* 58, 988, notes that the meagre remains of the text do not allow certainty.

⁶⁹ Noted by Nieddu 2004: 35 n. 101, who refers further to Burkert for the interpretation of *diphtheria* as ‘master-books’ in contrast with single sheets of lead serving as letters, *molubdion*.

text shows that this is indeed a letter.⁷⁰ The text opens with a deictic indication: 'This slave here has been sold out of (or 'in') Borysthenes, his name is Phaylles'; it then continues with the statement 'we wish that everything . . . be returned'. One way to make sense of this text is to imagine that the document was given to the slave himself (or to a special messenger, as suggested by Vinogradov), and that the slave was supposed to show it to the addressee, possibly a new owner. According to this scenario, the slave had been bought to be given to the addressee, so that (in exchange) the senders might recover all they wanted returned (or settle their debt).⁷¹

A similarly perplexing instance, where the status and purpose of the written text is unclear, is offered by a later document, this time incised on ceramic, and coming from the *chora* of Olbia (appendix 1, no. 11). The text is as follows: 'Nikophanas son of Adrastos gave Zopyrion a horse; let it be sent to me in the city, and let the document be given to him.' Here, although we have names, it is unclear who the sender and the addressee are. It is usually assumed that both Nikophanas and Zopyrion are in the city, and that Nikophanas is sending the message to a member of his family or an employee, whose name is omitted, to ask them to send the horse, and to ask for a written acknowledgement.⁷² However, in this scenario the usefulness of the written acknowledgement is unclear; it might make more sense to assume that Zopyrion is the writer, and that he is sending his receipt to a member of Nikophanas' family in the *chora* (Kozyrka, where the letter has been found) to get the horse, in exchange of which, the receipt will be given back to Nikophanas. The point is that whatever the details of the affair, the enunciative shifts within the text make it very difficult to know who is who; supplemental oral information would have had to be conveyed for the exchange to work.

Smoother is the text of a letter dated to the fifth century (probably to its end), coming from the small city of Kerkinitis near Olbia, and written not on lead, but on an amphora fragment (appendix 1, no. 8). After the name of the sender and that of the addressee in the dative, we have the expected shift to the first person. This document concerns local affairs (something that ties in well with the use of the cheaper—and non-sealable—ceramic fragment): the sender, Apatorios, asks Noumenios (most likely a dependent of his) to bring in the dry fish and some planks; the addressee is moreover required not to take any initiative, but to take care of the oxen, and to control something (taxes possibly) concerning the Scythians. There is no closing greeting formula.

From the fourth century onwards, letters from this region begin to present the typical epistolary prescript and final farewell clause. A farewell clause is certainly present on a lead letter from Panticapaeum, dated to c.400–350 BC (appendix 1, no. 10); the beginning of the text is fragmentary, so that it is impossible to know whether the name of the sender was followed by that of the addressee only, or also

⁷⁰ The absence of sender and addressee was noticed and commented upon by Vinogradov 1998: 162, who compared with the letter on an ostrakon from Ligurian Olbia (no. 31) and with the ostraka from the *chora* of Olbia (no. 11) and from Gorgippia (no. 13).

⁷¹ It may also have worked as a kind of receipt, although it is difficult to see how it could be of much use without the names of the owners, sender, or addressee.

⁷² Cf. Dana 2007: 79–81.

by a greeting *χαίρειν*; the latter seems more likely, given the valediction *ἔρρωσο*. But for the prescript, the letter is throughout written in the first person.

A standard opening appears also in a lead letter from Olbia dated to the mid-fourth century BC, sent by a certain Artikon to the people back home (*Ἀρτικῶν τοῖς ἐν οἴκῳ χαίρειν*, appendix 1, no. 12). After the greeting, the letter turns directly to practical issues: the sender fears that his family may be ejected from the house, and suggests a few alternative places they might move to, adding at the end an instruction concerning a share of wool. A certain unease with the letter format may be seen in the fact that the expected enunciative shift to first person speech after the greeting is nowhere to be found (any deictic references to the sender are avoided); the letter consists in injunctions to an addressee in the second person plural. Moreover, the letter still has no final greeting clause. The same is true of a slightly later letter from Nikonion (no. 20), which otherwise features a greeting formula followed by shift to the first person, statements concerning the health of the writer, his son, and a friend, and some specific requests.

The other documents from the Black Sea area are either too fragmentary, or do not clearly belong to the category of letters, or both; but the texts examined illustrate sufficiently well the slow move from a message formed by an address and a body entirely written in the third person of the sender to a message comprising prescript and clause, and a body expressed in the first person of the sender. The addressee is always in the second person, with one possible exception (appendix 1, no. 7, where the odd third person could be the addressee). Remarkably, even by the end of the fourth century there is no stable format. What is particularly interesting, however, is that the early messages (the two letters concerning the procedure of *sulan*) are very elaborate, complex texts: if they do not present the structure of letters, it is evidently because such a structure did not exist. The later messages are less elaborate, and seem to concern mainly local affairs; yet by then the use of a specific formulary has imposed itself, and so the writers make use of it.

At this point, however, we might want to ask whether sender and writer are the same person, and if so, whether it was the sender, or the writer, who made use of an epistolary format. This question, if put in general terms, is almost impossible to answer. Some criteria may give clues: for instance, well-formed letters, a flowing ductus, and the absence of word-division at line-ends within the body of the text are usually interpreted as indicating the work of a professional. Of the letters from the Black Sea, appendix 1, nos. 1, 4, 8, 12, and 18 do not have word-division at the end of the line and nos. 10, 13, 20, and 21 tend to it; nos. 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 15, and 17 have word-division at line-ends; nos. 3, 6, and 14 are too fragmentary for it to be possible to assess line-ends, while nos. 16, 19, and 22 are still unpublished. However, interpunctuation marks in the form of a semicolon placed more or less regularly are found both on letters that do not have word-division at the line-end (nos. 4, 12, and 18), and on letters with word-division at line-end (nos. 2, 3, and 5). The case of the complex letters of Achillodoros (no. 1) and Apatorios (no. 5), two letters belonging to the same world, may be used to further test these criteria. The first letter is difficult to follow because of the constant use of the third person for the sender; it does not have word-division at line-ends. Imagining that someone else wrote the letter for Apatorios would explain the syntax neatly; and the absence of word-division might speak for the hypothesis of a scribe. The second letter is much clearer than the first because of its use of first person pronouns for the sender—and it has word-division at the line-ends; if a

professional scribe was used here, he is invisible. However, first persons appear also in letters which do not present word-division at line-ends (nos. 4 and 8); more importantly, Achillodoros and Apatorios both belong to a world that made use of registers (the *diphtheria* mentioned in no. 5): most of these long-distance traders probably could write, but with varying levels of speed and proficiency, and if they could not write themselves, they will have had on board someone who could, again with differing degrees of proficiency. In general, the character and import of most of these texts are such that it would not have made sense to look for someone to scratch them. Thus, on the whole, I should think that in most instances the sender, or someone close to him, and not necessarily having an elevated position because of this ability, did write the text.⁷³ One last point should be made: the answer to this question of writer vs. sender is important only for what concerns the spread of literacy. From the point of view of the definition of an epistolary style, the question of who wrote is less important: because through receiving letters and through the contact with people who wrote, even someone who could not write himself could have absorbed the format and repeated it when dictating a message.

Let us now move to the letters from the West.⁷⁴ They are all very fragmentary, and fairly divergent restorations have been proposed; yet on the whole the picture they present is comparable to that offered by the letters from the Black Sea region. The oldest document is a letter on lead from Emporion, dated to the very end of the sixth century BC, or to the beginning of the fifth (appendix 1, no. 23). It is a long letter (fourteen lines of text remain), involving a number of parties (the addressee, who is to go to Saiganthe; the Emporitai; someone called Basped-, a non-Greek name; and possibly another person, unless it is Basped- who is referred to with a pronoun) and complex deals (the addressee has to buy twenty of something, as well as wine; Basped- has to deal with buying a ship; the cargo has to be transported; the ship may have to be towed; something may be shared). The beginning is lost, but the end is preserved, and it presents in the last line a verb in the first person singular of the perfect tense, 'I have ordered', followed by a greeting (*κεκέλευκα. χαίρε*). The presence at the end of the message of a greeting with a form of *χαίρειν* is extremely interesting: in the later formal codification *χαίρειν* will appear in the prescript, while a form of *ῥώννυμι*, such as *ἔρρωσο* or *ἔρρωσθε*, will be reserved for the farewell. Here the position at the end, at the place which will be occupied by the imperative *ἔρρωσο*, and just after the strongly assertive first person 'I have ordered', may help explain the second person imperative; *χαίρε* is also typically found at the end of the Homeric hymns. As for the presence of a first person perfect, *κεκέλευκα*, it does not allow any certain conclusions as to whether in the body of the letter the sender referred to himself

⁷³ Differently Jordan 2000: 93; but his corpus comprised only nine letters, and most did not have word-division at line-ends within the body of the text. The situation appears different now. Turner's argument, quoted by Jordan 2000: 93 n. 8, that 'The mark of the public letter-writer, making articulate the fears and only half-expressed thoughts of his clients, is to be seen everywhere in the platitudes and clichés of which so many private [papyrus] letters are composed', if it characterizes reasonably well the situation from the third century BC onwards, definitely does not apply to our corpus (a little more standardization would help interpretation enormously!). Old and new finds of fragments of alphabet sherds from the Black Sea region show that basic writing skills were relatively widespread: Dana 2009.

⁷⁴ On writing (Greek, Iberian, Etruscan, Gallic) in this area of the ancient world from the sixth to the second century BC, the contributions published in *Revue archéologique de Narbonnaise* 21 (1988), remain fundamental; see especially the remarkable survey in Bats 1988; see also Eidinow and Taylor 2010: 37 and n. 31, 41 and n. 47.

in the first or in the third person. *κεκέλευκα* might be part of a text all organized in the first person, but it might also be there, as Slings has suggested, to round off an order expressed previously in the third person.⁷⁵ The only other clue is the verb used at l. 8, *κέλευε*; this can be taken as an imperative (*κέλευε*, ‘tell’), but a verb in the third person (*κελεύει*, ‘he tells’) is just as likely—in which case, the body of the letter itself would have been composed in the third person.⁷⁶

Two other letters from the same area are too fragmentary to be worth discussing in detail (appendix 1, nos. 24 and 26); they probably also concerned trade, although for the second one the hypothesis of a *defixio* has also been advanced. Also from the area comes an early letter on clay (appendix 1, no. 25, dated to c.500 BC) that presents interesting, rather odd characteristics: in particular, a *χαίρε* (second person imperative) right at the beginning, followed by an address to ‘Energos brother’; then, information about what is and what is not needed (probably for a business in pottery), in the first person singular of the sender (cf. *κέκαυκα* at l. 5); the written document is referred to as an *epistole* (ll. 13–14).⁷⁷

The first document that conforms to generic expectations is a lead letter of a ship-owner to a captain (appendix 1, no. 29), found in the harbour of Marseilles and dated to the third century BC. On the outside it has simply the name of the addressee in the dative; the letter itself opens with ‘Megistes to Leukon, greetings’, followed by a standard *formula valetudinis* (*εἰ ὑγιαίνεις, καλῶς ποεῖς· ὑγιαίνομεν δὲ κ[α]ὶ ἡμεῖς*), and by the message, which is about moving the anchor of the ship. The letter closes with the clause *εὐτύχει*, ‘fare well’. This letter was certainly never opened: the lead, when it was found, did not present any traces of unrolling. It is interesting to find a letter on lead still in the third century BC—but then papyrus may have always been more expensive in the West. An official letter on lead from the Black Sea, of late Hellenistic or possibly even imperial period, shows at any rate that lead continued to be used for letters.⁷⁸

Let us now move from the margins towards the centre. Two lead letters from the Chalkidike have so far been discovered, both of them fourth-century, only one of which has been published (appendix 1, no. 33). The letter presents the normal epistolary prescript (‘-tos to Tegeas, greetings’); it is composed in the first person singular (the *ἡμῖν* that appears twice may imply associates), while the recipient is

⁷⁵ Slings 1994: 115: ‘As in the Berezan letter, the writer may be referring to himself in the 3rd person; if so, with *κελεύει* he introduces an order which he rounds off with *κεκέλευκα* in l. 14. This would be an argument against first person forms in the body of the texts’.

⁷⁶ *κελεύει* had been initially proposed by Sanmartí and Santiago (1987); in two later contributions (both published in 1988) Sanmartí and Santiago suggested reading *ἐρώ]τα καὶ κέλευε* (second person imperatives); Santiago 2003 now goes back to the third-person reading: ‘the writer gives instructions referring to himself in the third person; the verb is characteristic for this type of document recording instructions (*keleumata*) of an employer to his employees’. We may add that the *σέ* following the verbs is much easier to understand if we assume a third person.

⁷⁷ Prudence is of the order, as the letter is known only from a bad copy with a ‘most unusual alphabet’ (Johnston, in Jeffery 1990: 464 A): a fake? See bibliography in appendix 1, no. 25.

⁷⁸ See the letter published by Saprykin and Fedoseev 2008, appendix 1, C. Lead letters must have remained in use: one of Parthenius’ narratives has the heroine, Polykrite, communicate with her brother by inserting a lead letter (*μολυβδίνην ἐπιστολήν*) in a cake: Parthen. 9. 5 (the story is of course older: the short notice, or ‘manchette’, preceding most of the tales composing Parthenius’ *Love sufferings* and indicating the source of the story, mentions in this case Andriskos of Naxos—FGH 500 F 1, probably active c.300—and Theophrastus; a slightly different version is also in Plutarch, *De mul. vir.* 17, 254 d).

addressed in the second person singular; the sender is trying to buy wood, and in large quantities (no less than seven talents, and the purchase has to be completed in seven days, otherwise the agreement will be cancelled); an [ἐρρ]ω?[σο], ‘Be well’, closes the letter.

Finally Attica. Here the greater amount of data again allows a diachronic sketch, similar to that possible for the letters from the Black Sea region and from Spain. The earliest letters from Attica are graffiti on ceramic sherds (appendix 1, nos. 35–8).⁷⁹ They range in date from the mid-sixth century to the late fifth century, and not all of them may indeed have been letters (‘notes’ seems a more appropriate term); they differ widely in format, but they all seem to concern small everyday communications, over short distances, between people who know each other well. None of these documents presents anything even remotely close to a prescript, nor do any of them contain a final greeting clause. It is difficult not to agree with Harris’s rather dismissive evaluation of these texts.⁸⁰ The one that is closest to a letter is a graffito of the last quarter of the fifth century, on a black figure skyphos (no. 38), containing the following five-line text: Σοσίνεος | ἐπέστειλε | Γλαύκοι | ἐς ἄστυ | ἐνδεσμο(ν), ‘Sosineos sent to Glaukos in the city a bundle’ (or, with Jordan, ‘sent a letter in (the form of) a scroll to Glaukos in town’, reading the final part as a dative, ἐν δεσμοῖ[ι]; or also, with Immerwahr, ‘Sosineos sends to Glaukos: (send) a bundle into the city’).⁸¹ Whatever the exact interpretation, the use in this graffito of the verb ἐπιστέλλω in the past is intriguing, and points to epistolary language—but we are in the last quarter of the fifth century.

As for the letters on lead, they are later, appearing only at the end of the fifth century, and they are different in form: we are not anymore presented with hurried messages, but with real letters. One of them, from the Pnyx (no. 40), seems to concern a commercial transaction; it opens with the invocation to the gods (θεοί) which is typical of official documents, but it then has a prescript of sorts, with χαίρειν καὶ [, after which the restoration ὑγιαίνειν suggested by Louis Robert seems to impose itself. Thus, we may be witnessing a conflation of official and private formats, similar to what happens, at the same moment, in some Attic curses.⁸² However, other restorations are possible that eliminate the initial

⁷⁹ The first and oldest, no. 35, is in fact written with Megarian letter forms, and thus was probably written by a Megarian; the content does not lend itself to the idea that this is a long-distance letter (the writer asks another person to put a saw under the garden-door), so it is best to think of a Megarian in Athens.

⁸⁰ Harris 1989: 89. Pébarthe 2006: 81–2 uses these texts to show that there was a certain volume of correspondence, even in relatively low social circles. I think these texts show that literacy was diffused at all levels, and in this sense they are important; but they do not speak for an important use of writing for correspondence.

⁸¹ Resp. Immerwahr AVI no. 272; Jordan 1978 (SEG 28, 41). However, the comparison proposed by Jordan for δεσμός used of ‘a scroll-like parcel’, with the *defixio* IG iii, App. (DTA) 45, 2–3: Εὐάνδρον [κ]ατα- | δῶ ἐν δεσμοῖ[ω]ι μο- | λυβ[δίν]ωι καὶ .N. ., does not really work: the ‘lead desmos’ is only metaphorically the scroll, and it can be so because of the context, a *katadesmos*, where the notion of ‘bondage’ (esp. after καταδέω, to bind) is part of the horizon of expectations (see below, n. 92). Oikonomides (SEG 36, 121) restores the last two lines as ἐν δεσμοῖ | [τερίοι] and interprets it as a letter sent to a man in jail; but apparently the sherd was broken before being inscribed, and there is not room for much else.

⁸² Discussed below; see also Eidinow and Taylor 2010: 44–5 and nn. 62–3, and the problematic SEG 51, 984 (at the end of appendix 1), with invocation to ‘good fortune’ (but it is unlikely that this is a letter).

invocation; the content of the message is impossible to retrieve; and the end of the text is lost.

The three other documents from Athens are more interesting. One, the letter of Mnesiergos (appendix 1, no. 39), dated to the end of the fifth or the beginning of the fourth century BC, has been known to the scholarly world since the end of the nineteenth century: it is one of the very first lead letters to have been found. On the outside, the lead sheet details the address and persons to whom the letter should be delivered. The letter itself, on the other side of the lead sheet, opens with: *Μνησίεργος ἐπέστειλε τοῖς οἴκοι χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν*. ('Mnesiergos sent those at home greetings and be well'). We are here at the exact transition between a narrative opening and a formal prescript: the somewhat intrusive *ἐπέστειλε* points to a narrative rather than to a letter; remarkably, it is in the past, making it clear that the letter is composed from the point of view of the addressee. This is one of the earliest instances of the so-called epistolary aorist; another was on one of the sherds from the Athenian agora (no. 38: *Σοσίνεος ἐπέστελε Γλαῦκοι . . .*); compare instead the letter of Achillodoros (no. 1), or the letter of Lesis (no. 41).⁸³ The letter continues in the third person for one more sentence, then it shifts very slowly towards the first person (*ἀποδώσω*, in the first person future, is the last word of the letter). This letter was clearly written by someone else: the *ἔφασ[κ]ε* of l. 4 (*καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως ἔφασ[κ]ε [ἔχεν]*, 'he said that he too was doing well'), again in the epistolary past, is very difficult to account for otherwise. The construction shows that Mnesiergos explained what he wanted to say to the writer, who reproduced it in the third person, save for the last sentence. It is, however, interesting to notice that this sentence is extremely close to the later *formula valetudinis* *εἰ ἔρρωσαι, εἰ ἂν ἔχοι· καὶ γὰρ δὲ ὑγιαίνω*, 'if you are in good health, it would be good; I myself am also in good health'. One may suspect that the writer (the person who wrote the letter for Mnesiergos) had some notions of how to write a letter; but because he was here reporting Mnesiergos' words, he adapted the formula to the occasion. Alternatively, if Mnesiergos was writing, the weight of the beginning in the third person, and the inclusion of the wishes for health in the prescript, may have rendered difficult a quick switch to the first person.

Another lead letter from Attica (appendix 1, no. 41), dated to the early fourth century BC, and sent by a young boy, Lesis, presents a very similar picture. Here too, there was probably an address on the outside, but only traces are now visible. The letter itself is traced with beautiful, regular letters and almost impeccable spelling; from the signs left by the instrument used to incise the lead, Jordan (2000: 93) concludes that a reed stylus was used, of the type normally used to write on papyrus. The text opens with the names of sender and addressees, without any greetings ('Lesis sends to Xenocles and his mother', *Λήσις {ις} ἐπιστέλλει Ξενοκλεῖ καὶ τῇ μητρὶ*); until the third line, it is composed in the third person. Then there is

⁸³ And cf. the *κεκέλευκα* of the letter from Emporion no. 23 discussed above (n. 75). Thuc. 1. 129. 3 (the letter of Xerxes to Pausanias) is the first example of the use of an epistolary aorist in a literary letter: the sending of Artabazus to carry the letter (something that happens after the letter is finished) is described with an aorist, thus being seen from the point of view of the addressee. Koskeniemi 1956: 186–200 explains this usage as a consequence of the derivation of the letter from an oral message: a messenger, after he had arrived, would have used past tenses to describe the requests of the sender. The analysis of oral messages in Herodotus would not seem to support this hypothesis.

a shift to the first person. This could be explained by assuming that someone else wrote for Lesis, and that after the initial sentences, instead of summarizing what he was being told, the writer transcribed the boy's words as spoken; but the shift to the first person may also have been favoured by the urgency of the situation. The letter does not have a closing formula.⁸⁴

The last document to be considered was published as a letter of the Athenian banker Pasion, its date being fixed at before 370/369. Whether the Pasion who is writing is the banker or not is immaterial here.⁸⁵ But the way the letter is formulated, as well as its content, makes it unique. In the text as presented by the first editor, the sender, who speaks from the very beginning in the first person, giving his own and his father's name, Dikaiarchos, simply states that he is sending someone called Satyrion to punish and prosecute other persons who have wronged him: '(I), Pasion son of Dikaiarchos, am sending Satyrion to punish and to prosecute both Nikostratos, Deinon's brother, and Arethousios, because they are wronging me . . .'.⁸⁶ One cannot but agree with Sosin (2008) that this reading makes for an unlikely letter: there is no message in it, no addressee, and while the second *καὶ* just before the name of Nikostratos can be explained as building up a parallelism with the *καὶ* preceding Arethousios, it still makes the text difficult. Moreover, in a letter one does not expect the name of the writer's father. Sosin is surely right that in a message we need at the opening the names of a sender and an addressee; hence his proposal to see in Pasion the sender and in Dikaiarchos the addressee, who is asked to punish Satyrion and the others.⁸⁷ Even with this interpretation, some oddities of language remain, such as the very strong initial first person (name + *ἐπιστέλλω*) that finds no parallel in our corpus.⁸⁸ These oddities might, however, be explained by the assumption that the letter was written personally by the sender, someone possessing enough letters to be able to write a short letter himself, but not particularly interested (or versed) in epistolary conventions. The comparison with the letter sent by the slave Lesis from the foundry is instructive: there, no words were split over end-lines; here, word-division is endemic.

What can we conclude from this survey? Clearly, already in the sixth century, Greek traders from the Black Sea, but also landowners, did use writing for long- (and not so long) distance communication. The letters from Spain and the

⁸⁴ On the context of this letter, see, besides Jordan 2000, Harris 2004 (who argues from the use of 'despotes' made by the boy to denote his master that Lesis was a slave), and Harvey 2007. The possibility should be taken into account that Lesis is purposefully describing his situation (dire enough) as that of a slave. L. Holford-Strevens points out to me that the mother here might be Xenokles' (too?), a possibility that has not been given due attention in the interpretation of the document.

⁸⁵ Banker: Jordan 2003a. Doubts: Millett 1991: 267 n. 7; Gauthier, in *BE* 2004: 140; Sosin 2008: 106 n. 4.

⁸⁶ So Jordan 2003a. Text and translation in appendix 1, no. 42.

⁸⁷ Sosin 2008, an interpretation endorsed by Eidinow and Taylor 2010: 34. This requires one to assume a second error in the initial line, besides the missing *Δ* in Dikaiarchos' name, namely an *ο* instead of *ω* for the dative: as pointed out *per litteras* by L. Holford-Strevens, it seems rather early for reduction of *ω* to *ο*, and *ω* is found elsewhere in the document.

⁸⁸ It is paralleled by the very strong language used in the letter, a language not typical of legal proceeding, but pointing rather to extra-judicial pressure: cf. Sosin 2008: 108. This might be a curse: 'I, Pasion son of Dikaiarchos, am asking that Satyrion be prosecuted and punished'. The authors of a curse do not usually name themselves (see below, 48 and n. 93, 57 and n. 130); however, in the case of judicial prayer, the principal may state his or her name: Versnel 2009: 279.

Chalkidike fit this pattern too. Some of the ‘letters’ are ‘crisis-messages’, as Thomas puts it, messages sent in rather special circumstances (seizure of goods and/or of a person, as with Achillodoros and Apatorios);⁸⁹ but quite a number of them (especially those on ceramic sherds) are rather trivial communications. Attica is different: compared with the very high number of extant graffiti and curses of the sixth to fourth century, letters appear to be relatively rare, somewhat late, and fairly idiosyncratic. Writing was thus used in Attica for private purposes, but evidently not so much for letters.

In all cases it is very difficult to know whether the writer was the same as the sender; while there are a few instances where the language used in the letter makes it fairly certain that the letter was written by a person different from the sender, overall there is certainly here scope for regional variations, and even for variations from case to case. Moreover, in quite a few instances it is evident that the written message alone would not have been enough; oral instructions would have been required for the exchange to work. In those examples, one may suspect that the written message functioned more as a receipt than as a letter.

As a result, it seems evident that for the fifth century and even for part of the fourth it is impossible to speak of an epistolary style codified and perceived as such.⁹⁰ The comparison with other types of texts that use a very similar enunciative stance will confirm this.

2.2.2. Curses, Letter-curses, Letters to Gods

The material on which the earliest letters are written raises the question of the possible connection with curses, which were also mainly written on lead. Of course, in the case of the letters, the impression that lead was the main material may be misleading, since documents written on lead (and ceramic) survived, but any written on perishable materials will have been lost. Conversely, one might point out that although the great majority of curses are written on lead, there are some instances in which wooden tablets or other materials are used.⁹¹ But aside from the writing surface, there is also a certain similarity in the phraseology, that is, in the way the message in the two types of document is formulated; moreover, some curses refer to themselves as a ‘letter’.

The earliest instances of the practice of inscribing curses on lead are later than the earliest letters: they date to the fifth century, and come from Olbia on the Black Sea, Sicily, and Attica; but the practice spread quickly and widely.⁹² The aim of

⁸⁹ Thomas 2009; see also Eidinow and Taylor 2010.

⁹⁰ For Sykutris (1931: 189) this applies to the fourth century too, and not just to documentary letters but also to literary ones, such as those of Isocrates.

⁹¹ See Graf 1997: 132–4; Curbera 1999: 161; also Eidinow 2007: 201 for curses; Eidinow and Taylor 2010: 31 and n. 4 for both letters and curses. Appendix 1, no. 7 is an instance of a letter on ceramic reused for a curse; see also the comments of Chaniotis in *EBGR* 2001, no. 26.

⁹² Faraone 1991: 3. Faraone suggests (1991: 5) that the *defixio* was originally a purely verbal/gestural curse. The earliest terms for curses do not allude to writing: *εὐχά* (‘prayer’) is attested in Sicily, *κατάδεσμος* (‘binding spell’) is also frequently found, and of itself does not imply a material support; Faraone compares the sung *ῥῆμος δέσμιος* (‘binding song’) of the Erynies in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* (*δέσμιος* is used at 306 and 322). From the fourth century onwards, *καταγράφω* appears as the term

curses is to immobilize, to magically 'bind', the other (this is the case of judicial, competitive, or erotic *κατάδεσμοι*, literally 'binding curses'), or also to obtain redress or justice, for example for a theft or for abuse, in which case the curse took the form of a prayer.⁹³ The most basic scheme for the binding *κατάδεσμοι* is that of giving lists of names that follow each other sequentially without line breaks. But some early curse tablets are modelled on formats typical of public communication; more precisely, some early fourth-century *κατάδεσμοι* from Attica (and some earlier ones from Sicily) imitate public inscriptions, listing names with patronymics in vertical parallel columns, and, in two cases, even adding the typical heading of decrees, *θεοί· ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ* ('Gods; with good fortune').⁹⁴ In other instances, the curse tablet adopted the model of a private communication, making use of the epistolary format, something that must have appeared almost natural, since letters were also often written on lead.⁹⁵ In two instances, again from Attica, the term *ἐπιστολή* is used; in other curses, it is the presence of an address on the outside of the lead sheet, or the use of verbs of sending, that orients one towards an epistolary interpretation. Finally, two *κατάδεσμοι* probably from Arcadia (or Megara?) and one from Athens imply that the dead might read the *γράμματα*, meaning the tablet itself, which is clearly seen as a letter, with its potential for communication. On the basis of this type of document, a category of 'Unterweltsbriefe', mainly addressed to Persephone and Hermes, was tentatively defined by Preisendanz, who, however, even while proposing the term (in which he was following the lead of Wilhelm), pointed out at the scarcity of attestations.⁹⁶ Let us see some examples.

with which one 'inscribes' or 'registers' the victim of the curse in the presence of one of the infernal gods. Overview in Graf 1997: 118–74; Eidinow 2007: 139–55. Superb contextual presentation of Sicilian *defixiones* in Curbera 1999.

⁹³ See Versnel 1991; Versnel 2009: 278–82 and 326–7, where he suggests that while in the *defixiones* (or *katadesmoi*) the *defigens* does not give his name but the target is named, in the prayers the principal names himself but the target is unknown ('a thief'); a more nuanced view in Eidinow 2007: 143–4 and n. 16.

⁹⁴ Faraone 1991: 4, who gives as examples of the first practice DTA 55 and SGD 48 (= NM 14470, re-edited by Jordan and Curbera 2008, who date it now on prosopographical grounds to 345–335 BC), while the heading is found in SGD 18 and DTA 158. On the difference between horizontal and vertical lists, see Gordon 1999; on lists in Sicilian *defixiones*, Curbera 1999: 166–7; on Attic *defixiones*, Parker 2005: 121–33.

⁹⁵ Eidinow 2007: 145–6 relates this to the language of business transactions. Gager 1992: 201 remarks that epistolary communication with spirits and deities is not uncommon in spells, and refers to Egyptian parallels; at 248 n. 10, in the course of a comparison with the letter carried by Bellerophon (Hom. *Il.* 6. 168–70), he stresses that the earliest Greek *defixiones* take the form of letters to the underworld. While the parallels (and esp. the rapprochement with Bellerophon) are interesting, I would be sceptical of seeing here any influence from the East; see Johnston 1999: 90–5.

⁹⁶ Faraone 1991: 4; Preisendanz 1972: 'Wenn auch alle schriftlich geäußerten *katadesmoi*, einschließlich der nur aus Namen bestehenden, die Aufgabe von Unterweltsbriefe zu erfüllen hatten und so mit Wilhelm *tachydromeia* heißen können (...), haben sich doch bisher nur diese beiden epistolai gefunden' ('even if all inscribed curses, including those consisting simply of a name, were meant as letters to the Underworld and so could be called, with Wilhelm, *tachydromeia*, ... to date only two have appeared that are explicitly defined *epistolai*': he meant DTA 102 and 103). 'Epistole' appears also in SGD 109, discussed below. For *γράμματα* to the dead see Audollent *DT* 43 and 44, discussed below, n. 108. Cf. also Graf 1997: 130–1; Versnel 2002: 60–1.

The first curse to present itself as a letter is a text from Kotana in Attica, dated to the fourth century bc:

ἐπιστο[ς]λὴν | πέμπων | [δ]αίμο<σιν> | καὶ Φερσεφών<η> {s} | 5 κομίσας | Τιβιτίδα |
τὴν Χοιρίνης | τὴν ἐμ<ε> ἀδικο(ῦ)σαν | θυγατ<έρα> | 10 ἄνδρα | καὶ τρία <π>αἰδία |
ἐκείνης | δύο θήλεα καὶ ἓν ἄρρεν· | Παγκράτη Μαντ<ίαν> | 15 Διόφαντον | Μεταγένη.
(IG iii, App. (DTA) 102)

I am sending a letter to the daimones and Persephone, and delivering (to them) Tibitis, (daughter of) Choirine, who did me wrong, her daughter, husband, and three children, two female and one male, Pankrates, Mantias, Diophantos, and Metagenes.
(Trans. Gager 1992)⁹⁷

The explicit mention of an offence puts this curse in the category of ‘judicial prayers’: in texts of this type, the sender feels that he has received an injustice, and sends a letter to the gods of the Underworld (here Persephone and the *daimones*), asking for rectification.

The other example of a curse in which the term ἐπιστολή appears also belongs to the group of judicial prayers, as the invocation to Dike shows; it comes from Attica as well:

a. Ἐρμ[ῆ] καὶ Φερσεφ[ό]ν[η] τήνδε ἐπιστο[λ]ὴν ἀπο- | πέμ[πω· μή]ποτε ταῦτα ἰς
ἀνθρώπο(υ)ς ἀναφ[αί]νε[ν] | αὐτο(ύ)ς. Δίκη, τυχεῖν τέλο(υ)ς δίκης. | Καλλικράτης·
Ἀναξικράτους : Εὐδίδα[κ]τος | 5 Ὀλυμπιόδωρος [... θ]εόφιλος...]όδωρος |
Ζ[ώ]πυρος : Πασίω[ν] Χαρίνος Καλλένικος Κινεῖαν | Ἀπ[ο]λλ[ο]όδωρος [... θ]εός
Φιλοκλῆς [Δη]μόφιλος | καὶ σύνδικοι καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος | [- - - - -]ος | 10 ἀρριό . ? :
Δημοκρά[τ]η[ς] τὸν περὶ τῆς δίκης[s] | δικαζ[ό]μενον : Μνησίμαχος Ἀντίφιλο[s].

b. Λύσις Δωροθέου Ἀρχίνος Χαρίνος | Μενεκλέους...

(Wilhelm 1904b = IG iii, App. (DTA) 103)⁹⁸

a. To Hermes and Persephone I am sending this letter; that they may never bring these up among men. O Justice, may I finally receive justice. Kallikrates son of Anaxikrates; Eudidaktos; Olympiodoros [...] Theophil[os...] -odoros, Zopyros, Pasion, Charinos, Kallinikos, Kineas, Apollodoros, ... -theos, Philokles, Demophilos and their advocates and if there is someone else of [their friends?], Demokrates who judges on the trial, Mnesimachos, Antiphilos.

b. Lysis son of Dorotheos, Archinos, Charinos son of Menekles...

Interestingly, both texts lack the name of the sender, while the victims of the curse are well-defined: in this respect, then, these two texts do not correspond to Versnel’s definition of a typical prayer for justice. Moreover, the first document (DTA 102) is not so much a letter as a narrative of sending a letter; the gods

⁹⁷ This is the side A; side B concerns other people and is different in character (unlike in A, there is no mention of an *ἀδικία*, ‘injustice’, and the text begins directly with *κατόχους*, ‘restrained’, followed by the names of two boxers; forms of *κατεῖχειν* are used also for the names of the three women that follow, to be restrained by Persephone, Hermes, and Hades). Short discussion in Gager 1992: 101–2; Eidinow 2007: 146, 229, and 378–9. See Wilhelm 1904b: 112–13 for the hypothesis that this tablet might afford an opening into the life of courtesans.

⁹⁸ Wilhelm’s text (1904b: 122–5), to which I refer for possible restorations and detailed commentary; his interpretation is endorsed by Parker 2005: 128–30 (with discussion of the political background). Wilhelm’s readings connect this tablet to judicial *defixiones*; the process was linked to naval affairs, and dated to the years 325–322 bc. Gager 1992 maintains the text of Wünsch, as does Eidinow 2007: 230 and 380.

themselves, the *daimones* and Persephone, are not directly addressed. To put it differently: instead of a prescript in the third person, we have an epistolary narrative in the first person present (πέμπων), which allows the author of the curse not to name himself, and which gives the curse its performative value; this is asyndetically coordinated to the statement, also in the first person but aorist (κομίσας), that the author has conveyed (presumably to these same underworld gods) the victims of the curse.⁹⁹ Thus, the epistolary narrative reflects two moments: the actual utterance of the curse, and the continuity of the ritual action implied in the sending of a letter. The second document (DTA 103) elaborates along the same lines: the author opens by announcing that he is sending a letter to Hermes and Persephone; this is followed by an expression of his wishes, both in terms of the permanency of the curse (ταῦτα must refer to the written tablet), and of what he personally hopes to obtain; then the list of names is supplied.

There is thus an epistolary subtext to these curses, but their formulae do not reflect those of any known ancient letter. In three further curses, two from Attica, one from Euboea, of the same period as DTA 102 and 103, the names of the Underworld gods are written on the external part of the lead sheet, like the address in a letter; but the internal part, that is, the curse itself, does not present any epistolary characteristic. The most detailed text, a κατάδεσμος from Attica dated to the fourth century BC, has on the outside the names of Hermes and Hekate in the nominative (Ἑρμῆς χθόνιος καὶ Ἑκάτη χθονία); inside, the curse:

[Φ]ερέν[ικο]ς πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῆν τὸν χθόνιον καὶ [τὴν Ἑ]-
κάτην χθονίαν καταδεδέσθω· Γαλήνην, ἥτις Φερέν[ι]-
κωι, καταδέω πρὸς Ἑρμῆν χθονικὸν καὶ Ἑκάτην χθονίαν κατα[δ]-
έω· καὶ ὥς οὗτος ὁ βόλυβδος ἄτιμος καὶ ψυχρὸς, οὕτω ἕκε<ί>νος καὶ τὰ ἕκε<ί>νω ἄτιμα
[κ]-
5 αὶ ψυχρὰ ἔστω καὶ τοῖς μετ' ἕκε<ί>νο(υ) ἅ περὶ ἑμο(ῦ) λέγοιεν καὶ βο(υ)λευοῖατο.
(...)

Let Pherenikos be bound before Hermes of the underworld and Hekate of the underworld. I bind Pherenikos's (girl) Galene to Hermes of the underworld and to Hekate of the underworld I bind (her). And just as this lead is worthless and cold, so let that man and his property be worthless and cold, and those who are with him who have spoken and counseled concerning me. (...)¹⁰⁰

As for the other two texts, they are addressed to the Praxidikai and Hermes (πρὸς τὰς | Πραξιδίκας, | πρὸς Ἑρ[μῆν]), and to Hekate and Persephone ([Ἑ]κάτη καταχθο[νία]) | καὶ Περσιφόνῃ); their internal side is barely legible, but one seems to consist simply of a list of names, while in the other the verbs καταγράφω and

⁹⁹ Eidinow's translation (2007: 378) seems to imply that the letter conveys Tibitis and her friends ('I am sending a letter to the gods below and Persephone, conveying Tibitis'); cf. instead Gager 1992: 201–2: 'I am sending a letter, and deliver (to them) Tribitis.' See Graf 1997: 130–1 for the relationship between the oral recitation of the spell and its inscription (contemporaneous: but also in the letter above not much time needed to have passed); and Carastro 2006: 164–6 for remarks on the role of writing (seen as more and different than simply a transcription of the oral curse: 'écrire n'est pas transcrire').

¹⁰⁰ DTA 107 = Gager 1992, no. 40; I give here only the first half of the curse, in Gager's translation; the second half proceeds along very similar lines, but the indication that any other supporters of Pherenikos must be bound too (καὶ εἴ τ[ι]ς ἄλλος Φερενίκωι σύνδικ[ος]... καταδεδέσθω) permits one to deduce a legal context. Interestingly, Galene appeared also in DTA 102 B: cf. Wilhelm 1904b: 112.

ἀποκερύττω (ἀποκηρύσσω, ‘I banish’) can be recognized.¹⁰¹ Clearly, these three are not judicial prayers, but rather binding curses; they are also rather dissimilar within themselves, with the first using a ‘wish-style’ formula and analogy to expand on the binding formula, while the second goes for the simple list of names, and the third for the bare ‘binding’ formula.¹⁰²

Finally, three documents, two from Attica and one from Sicily, all probably later than those we have seen (second–first century BC?), present the motif of ‘sending a gift’ to the gods of the underworld, a gesture that is in one instance explicitly associated with a letter. So begins one of the Attic documents:

Δαίμονι χθονίῳ καὶ τῇ χθο- | νίαι καὶ τοῖς χθονίοις πᾶσι | πέμπω δῶρον... |
καταχθόνι[α] αὐτὸν Α... | 5 .TIP ἀγαθὲ, ἃ αὐτοῦ... (DTA 99)

To the chthonian daimon and the chthonian goddess and all the chthonian divinities
I send a gift...¹⁰³

The text comprises approximately fifteen lines, but owing to its bad state, the nature of the gift is unclear. Another curse from Attica, now lost, but probably from the same grave as the previous one (and thus from the same milieu) also has the formula πέμπω δῶρον. A long and complex text from Lilybaeum in Sicily, dated to the second century BC, and written from right to left, is more specific: it opens with a straight address to Hermes ‘the Binder’ and the Telchines (δέομαί σου, κά- | τω Ἑρμῇ κάτοχε, 1–2); it then ‘sends’ the gift, the handsome girl Prima (δῶρον τὸ πέμπω | παιδίσκη, 5–6), who is described in detail; it then states that ‘Allia Prima, of her the letter and... I write’ (Ἀλλία Πρίμαν τα- | ὑτης τὴν ἐπειστ[ολήν] | καὶ τὸ... γράφω, 22–3).¹⁰⁴ Again, there is no mention of injustice: it seems clear that these are ‘binding’ κατάδεσμοι; but it is interesting to find the term ‘epistole’ in connection with the sending of a gift.¹⁰⁵

That the ‘writtenness’ of the curses is important, and that specific attention is dedicated to it, is clear from the care given to the way these documents are (mis) inscribed (e.g. retrograde, with some names written backwards, from bottom to top, with drawings, with nonsense letters...); the fourth century κατάδεσμος from Athens DTA 67, for instance, which is not addressed to any specific

¹⁰¹ The texts are Ziebarth, *Neue Verfluchungstafeln* 20 (from Euboea, c. third century BC) and 26 (from Attica, undated). Cf. Faraone 1991: 4; Versnel 2002: 48–9 and 60–3.

¹⁰² On the three main ‘styles’ of curses and their formulae see Faraone 1991; Eidinow 2007: 144–52, and 150 for DTA 107.

¹⁰³ DTA 99; cf. also the very similar, and now lost, SGD I 54 (Austin, *Proceedings of the British School at Athens* 27 (1925–6), 73–4) = López Jimeno 1999, no. 36, probably first century BC, and probably from the same grave as DTA 99; on both documents, Versnel 2009: 345 n. 90.

¹⁰⁴ SGD 109 = Brugnone 1984: 158–62 no. 184 (= SEG 34, 952) = Eidinow 2007: 430–2 (with full text and translation; Eidinow, however, relies on the text of Gabrici, which has been superseded by that of Brugnone). On the motif, see Versnel 2009: 345; López Jimeno 1990 (and for this text, 139–40).

¹⁰⁵ As Versnel 2009: 345 says, ‘this tallies nicely with expressions containing forms of δέχομαι (ποτίδεξαι/ποτιδέξεσθε), asking the gods of the Underworld to receive some persons’, mentioned in some lead tablets from Morgantina (SGD 118, 119, and 121, cf. Eidinow 2007: 432–3). A gift is mentioned also in a tablet from Olbia Pontica, dated between the third and the first century BC, and published in Bravo 1987 (SEG 37, 673; translation in Gager 1992, no. 48). The author of the curse addresses the dead (the curse functions through analogy), and promises a gift if he will restrain his opponents. The situation is thus different, and there are no epistolary markers; but the text present an interesting shift from ‘we’ to ‘I/me’, which may point to the ritual context of the casting of the curse (Bravo 1987; Gager 1992: 138).

divinities but relies simply on analogy, calls attention to the fact that the text is written backwards: the curse states that ‘Just as these (words) are cold and backwards (ὥσπερ ταῦτα ψυχρὰ καὶ ἐπαρίστερα), in the same way may the words of Krates be cold and backwards (οὕτως τὰ Κράτητος τὰ ῥήματα ψυχρὰ [καὶ] | [ἐπαρί]στερα γέν[οι]το), and those of the informers with them and the judges . . .’.¹⁰⁶

Just as importantly, a few texts stress that they are (or might potentially be) ‘for reading’. Thus, DT 52, a late-fourth-century curse from Athens, begins by listing the names of the offenders, and then continues: ‘I bind Kerkis, both the words and the deeds of Kerkis and the tongue, before those youth who died unmarried, and whenever they read these words (καὶ ὅποτα- | ν οὗτοι ταῦτα ἀναγνώσων), then will be the time for Kerkis to speak (τότε Κέρκιδι καὶ τὸ φθένξασθαι). I bind Theon, him and his girls and his craft and his resources and his work and his words and deeds. O Hermes who binds, keep these things and read (these words) for as long as they are living (Ἐρμῇ χθόνιε [τ]αῦτα | 15 σὺ κ]άτεχε καὶ ἀναγνώθι ταῦτα τέως ἂν οὗτοι ζώσων).’¹⁰⁷ Fascinatingly, the reading of the tablet by the dead, a reading which will never happen, but which would release the victim from the curse, is contrasted to the request to Hermes to ‘keep these’ and ‘read these’ for as long as the intended victims of the curse are alive: Hermes’ repeated reading will maintain the curse activated.¹⁰⁸ Conversely, reading by a mortal, and more precisely by the person who wrote the curse, is in a few instances specified as the condition for deactivating the curse: thus, an early curse/prayer from Pella stipulates that ‘I entrust (this curse) to Makron and the *daimones*. And were I ever to unfold and read these words again after digging (the tablet) up, only then should Dionysophon marry, but not before.’¹⁰⁹

What can we conclude from this survey? First, references to the epistolary format are found in both judicial prayers and *κατάδεσμοι*; letter writing can thus function as a paradigm for both. As Versnel puts it, ‘Continuous reading by the divine addressee, then, is at least one of the objectives of writing a letter to the god and depositing it at a place where the god is thought to be present, be it his sanctuary [. . .] or the nether world via a grave, a pit or a well.’¹¹⁰ Second, the reference to letters, that is to a type of document in which the sender gives at the very opening, in the prescript, his own name and that of the addressee, is not sufficient to overcome the curse writer’s reluctance to name herself or himself, not

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Eidinow 2007: 167, with other instances of analogy, and 363–4 for full text and translation; Curbera 1999: 162–3.

¹⁰⁷ Jordan 1999: 119–20, with an excellent commentary; Eidinow 2007: 393–4 (but her translation is unreliable).

¹⁰⁸ Versnel 2002: 61–2. The possibility that the dead may read the message is evoked, only to highlight its impossibility, in two very similar texts from the same grave, DT 43 and DT 44 (c.300 BC, possibly from Megara, or from Arcadia): DT 43 states that ‘Whenever you, o Pasianax [probably the deceased] read these letters—But neither will you, o Pasianax, ever read these letters, nor will ever Neophanes son of Agasiboulos, direct a lawsuit. But just as you, o Pasianax, lie inert here, so may also Neophanes be inert and become nothing.’ Cf. Bravo 1987 and Voutiras 1999; overall discussion in Versnel 2002: 60–2; Nisoli 2007: 39–41.

¹⁰⁹ Voutiras 1998 (SEG 43, 434), ll. 3–4; cf. Versnel 2009: 317–19. At l. 7, the request to ‘keep [this piece of writing?] for me’, shows how important it is that a readable text continues to exist.

¹¹⁰ Versnel 2009: 62.

even in the two instances of ‘letter to the underworld’ which were clearly judicial prayers, where the name of the author is, at least in Versnel’s definition, expected. This implies that even if the distinction between ‘straight’ *κατάδεσμοι* and judicial prayers is worth maintaining (and not only because of its undeniable heuristic value, but because it does correspond to differences within the corpus of ancient curses), there is indeed a ‘borderland’, a fairly consistent grey area between the two.¹¹¹ Third, the curses that present explicit reference to the letter format are comparatively rare: interestingly, they mostly date from the fourth century BC, that is from a moment when both curses and letter writing were still looking for their appropriate, written, format.¹¹²

Another group of documents found in graves presents texts that have been compared with letters: the gold lamellae commonly labelled as ‘Orphic’ or ‘Bacchic-Orphic’.¹¹³ Gold lamellae deposited in tombs, inscribed or uninscribed, have been found all over the Greek world: in southern Italy, northern Greece, and Crete, but also in the Peloponnese, in Sicily and in Rome, on Lesbos and possibly in Asia Minor. Most are from the fourth century BC, although one from Hipponion (southern Italy) may be as early as the fifth century BC, while the one lamella from Rome may be as late as the second or third century AD.¹¹⁴ These lamellae have been organized variously, on the basis of content, and/or of provenance. Some of the long hexametrical texts consist of instructions and performative injunctions addressed to the deceased, which frame a first-person declaration of identity by the deceased himself, in the central part of the text; others are mainly in the first person, consisting in a series of statements made by the soul to an interlocutor, the underworld goddess, who answers back in a performative speech-act to state that the defunct ‘shall be god’; other texts are much shorter, and simply give the name of the deceased, or add the qualification *μύστης*.¹¹⁵ Five among the shorter lamellae published to date appear to take up an epistolary scheme, with the name of the addressee(s) in the dative followed in three instances by *χαίρειν*; moreover, in three instances the text also gives the name of the sender. Even so, it is unclear that they should be considered letters. Here are the texts:

1. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 16b = Graf and Johnston 2007 no. 31, gold lamella from a cist grave close to a temple from Pella/Dion, end

¹¹¹ Emphasis on this borderland in Jordan 1999: 115. For this reason, I hesitate to follow the further inference of Versnel 2009: 62 that ‘in the field of the conventional *defixio* the motive of fixing the spoken curse formula is more dominant than in the prayer for justice, which naturally and demonstrably is generally [?] phrased as a letter or at least as a direct form of communication with the god’.

¹¹² The difference between the Greek curses and the Egyptian ‘letters to the dead’ is most clearly set out in Johnston 1999: 90–5.

¹¹³ On the impropriety of such denominations, and on the kind of mystery cults (Dionysiac/ Eleusinian?) one might imagine behind them, see Calame 2008; Calame 2009 [2006]: 210–28; Ferrari 2007. See Curbera 1999: 161–2 for the possible connection between the lead sheets of the *defixiones* and the golden lamellae (both addressed to underworld gods; both on thin sheets of metal, shaped as leaves).

¹¹⁴ See the map and convenient presentation in Graf and Johnston 2007: 2–49. It is important to realize that these are fluid texts, linked to specific ritual contexts: Ferrari 2010 speaks of a ‘palaeotype’.

¹¹⁵ Detailed analysis of the pragmatic and enunciative aspects in Calame 2009 [2006]: 177–210; see also Ferrari 2010.

- of fourth century BC: *Φερσεφόνη | Ποσειδίππος μύστης | εὐσεβής*, ‘To Persephone Poseidippus, pious initiate’.
2. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 16k = Graf and Johnston 2007 no. 37, gold lamella from a Hellenistic grave in Vergina: *Φιλίστη Φερσεφόνη χαίρειν*, ‘Philiste to Persephone, rejoice’.
 3. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L15a, gold lamella from Heraclea in Macedonia, date uncertain: *Φιλωτήρα τῶι Δεσπότηι χέρε(ν)*, ‘Philotera to the Lord, rejoice’.
 4. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 15 = Graf and Johnston 2007 no. 15, gold lamella from Eleutherna in Crete, folded once, 2nd/1st cent. BC: *[Πλού]τωνι καὶ Φ- | [ερσ]οπὸνει χαίρειν*, ‘To Pluto and Persephone, rejoice’.
 5. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 14 = Graf and Johnston 2007 no. 17, gold lamella from Rethymnon, dated to between 25 BC and 40 AD, unfolded: *Πλούτωνι | Φερσεφόνη[ι]*, ‘To Pluto. To Persephone’.¹¹⁶

It has been argued that these five documents should be considered part of a larger ensemble of sixteen ‘short’ lamellae, bearing in most cases only the name of the departed.¹¹⁷ How to interpret the function of these ‘short’ lamellae is difficult. As Johnston has suggested, they might be proxies, intended to speak on behalf of the soul, presumably unable to speak—in which case there would be an ‘epistolary’ side, since the lamella would function as a message that the dead brings along to hand over to the infernal gods.¹¹⁸ A detailed case for an epistolary (and non-dedicatory) interpretation of the short lamellae has been advanced by Dickie, on the basis of a comparison between the short lamella, no. 1 above, and the opening of two quasi-identical lamellae, symmetrically disposed over the chest of a woman, in a fourth-century tomb at Pelinna, in Thessaly.¹¹⁹ The Pelinna lamellae open with two hexameters:

*νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένον, τρισόλβιε, ἅματι τῶιδε
εἰπείν Φερσεφόνοι σὸς Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε.*

Now you have died and now you have come into being,

O thrice happy one, on this same day.

Tell Persephone that the Bacchic One himself released you.¹²⁰

Based on the presence in the second line of the Pelinna tablets of a *verbum dicendi* (the injunction expressed with the infinitive *εἰπείν*, ‘tell’) followed by the dative ‘to

¹¹⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, texts from Graf, in Graf and Johnston 2007; translations Johnston, with modifications.

¹¹⁷ Johnston, in Graf and Johnston 2007: 94–5 (cf. 134–6 and 183), distinguishes between longer texts (primarily mnemonic devices, giving instructions to the deceased), and proxies; the latter ‘may also be understood broadly as mnemonic devices’, since the reason why the soul itself is unable to speak (and thus needs a proxy) may be postmortem confusion.

¹¹⁸ Johnston, in Graf and Johnston 2007: 134. Note however the doubts of Calame 2008: 303–4 on the legitimacy of considering these short texts and the longer lamellae as expressions of the same religiosity.

¹¹⁹ Dickie 1995 (cf. Graf and Johnston 2007 no. 26 a and b; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 7a and b).

¹²⁰ Text and translation in Graf and Johnston 2007: 36–7, with commentary at 131–3; detailed analysis of the enunciative shifts in Calame 2009 [2006]: 208–10; correlation of these shifts to changes in rhythm (hexameters for the first voice, the leader of the funeral rites; lyric verses for the second voice, Persephone) in Ferrari 2010. See also Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 61–94.

Persephone', Dickie argues that also in the short lamellae the datives are not datives of dedication, but should be interpreted as 'To Persephone, (tell...)'. Thus, while in the longer texts which are similar to the Pelinna tablets the deceased is told to tell (and he is also told what to say), in the shorter tablets the deceased is presented as addressing the divinity—through the tablet, of course, which results in something close to the prescript of a letter. However, there is no 'body' of the letter, no message, in the short lamellae. Dickie proposes a further comparison with two 'long' poetic lamellae from Thurii that present the deceased as speaking in the first person and stating the request he is going to make: 'Now I come, come as a suppliant to Persephone, so that she may kindly send me to the seats of the pure'.¹²¹ A recently published lamella from Pherae offers a splendid example of such a request, expressed in the first person and evidently intended for an underworld god, probably Persephone: 'Send me to the bands of initiates; I am able to perform the [holy] rites of Demeter Chthonia and Mountain Mother'.¹²² In the case of the short lamellae, we would have to assume that the tablet just provides the opening address ('To Persephone' or 'To Persephone, greetings'), while the request itself is left unformulated.

And yet, considering the importance of the declaration of identity in most of the longer lamellae, it might be simpler to interpret the short texts that only contain the name of the deceased along similar lines, as declarations of identity. It is true that the identity asserted in the longer texts is the one shared by the initiated, expressed in the formula 'I am a son of Earth and starry Sky'; but in a recently published lamella from Amphipolis, dated to the fourth/third century BC, the deceased, while asserting her ritual purity, also states her (earthly) identity: 'Pure and sacred to Dionysos Bacchios I am; Archeboule daughter of Antidoros'.¹²³ The short texts with the name of the deceased and dative of an underworld god could be declarations of identity, addressed (or dedicated) to the god. Viewed in this light, the only problematic short texts are those presenting an addressee in the dative, followed by *χαίρειν*. But one may wonder whether *χαίρειν* is really to be understood here as a greeting; rather it may be an invitation to the gods to rejoice over the gift of a golden lamella and of the person now dead, according to a more fundamental meaning of *χαίρειν* (invitations to rejoice, expressed through the repeated use of the verb *χαίρειν*, are actually present in one of the gold lamellae from Thurii).¹²⁴ In the pragmatic situation in which these texts function, the latter interpretation may be more appropriate; however, the fact remains that the enunciative stance of these texts

¹²¹ Graf and Johnston 2007, no. 6 and 7, ll. 6–7 = Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 10 a and b, 6–7; cf. Dickie 1995: 82.

¹²² I follow here the text and translation proposed by Ferrari and Prauscello 2007; cf. Ferrari 2010: 212–13. Graf and Johnston 2007 no. 28 and Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 13a restore a reference to Dionysos at the end of l. 1 (cf. SEG 55, 612).

¹²³ Graf and Johnston 2007 no. 30 = Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 16n. Note also the (late) lamella from Rome, Graf and Johnston 2007, no. 9 = Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 11, where the dead woman is addressed by her name. On the collective identity of the *mystai*, Calame 2009 [2006]: 224–8.

¹²⁴ Graf and Johnston 2007, no. 3 = Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 L 8. For the exact meaning and function of *χαίρειν* here (once, initially, 'welcome'; and twice, later, 'rejoice') see Ferrari 2010: 213–14.

is that of a third-person address, much closer to that of letters than to that of prayers.¹²⁵

2.3. CONCLUSION

Although the first written document mentioned in Greek literature is a letter—the folded tablet given by Proetus to Bellerophon with the injunction to put the carrier to death—communication across a spatial distance (letter writing) was not among the earliest uses of writing in Greece. Even bearing in mind that the loss of certain types of evidence may skew our interpretation, we have to wait until the sixth century for the first letters. One important point emerging from the survey offered above of the uses of writing in archaic Greece is the existence of strong regional differentiations; similar differences apply also to the use of letter writing (or more precisely, for this period, to the use of writing for long-distance communication), with some regions (and some milieus) being much more productive than others.

The survey of the earliest examples of written long-distance communication has shown that the letter is initially an oral message couched in writing; certain verbs, such as ἐπιστέλλω, present themselves automatically to the writer, since they would have been used also for the oral order; similarly, the names of sender and addressee are felt to be necessary, and appear in most instances from early on. Sometimes the name of the addressee only is made, or alternatively only that of the sender: it may be questioned whether such documents should be considered letters. The address on the outer part of the letter is present from the earliest instances, but it is not a systematic characteristic. As for the letter itself, only in the fourth century does a prescript emerge, with the transformation and standardization of the ancient, oral form ὁ δεῖνα πῶ δεῖνι τάδε λέγει ('A to B thus says', found, as we shall see, in the letters embedded in Herodotus' *Histories*) into the new form ὁ δεῖνα πῶ δεῖνι χαίρειν ('A to B, greetings'). The transition is marked by letters such as that of Mnesiergos (no. 39), where we still have a form, ἐπέστειλε ('A sends to B') that may be put on a par with λέγει, as in the old address; instead of the demonstrative τάδε ('this'), however, now the verb directs the salutation, χαίρειν.¹²⁶ Transitional forms are observable throughout the fifth century and into the fourth. This fits with the Greek picture of the development of the epistolary greeting that we shall find in Lucian: while it would be dangerous to rely too much on Lucian's statement about the relative lateness of the salutation with *chairein* in official contexts, his claim seems to be borne out by the evidence.¹²⁷ In private contexts, the first time χαίρειν is attested is at the end of a lead

¹²⁵ On the initial meaning of χαίρειν see Wachter 1998, Calame 2005, Day 2010: 232–80. Comparison with the enunciative stance of epigrams addressing passers-by with χαίρειν, χαίρετε (see below, n. 128) might also be rewarding: see meanwhile Porciani 1997: 160–2 (but I would disagree with his evaluation of epistolary communications as functioning through 'modalità ben collaudate' by the mid-sixth century).

¹²⁶ Koskeniemi 1956: 156–8 makes the sensible point that a messenger in an oral context will have begun by transmitting a greeting. The letter from Hermonassa (no. 18), with its initial vocative and its absolute use of ἐπιστέλλω, is particularly interesting in this respect.

¹²⁷ Discussed below, 90–8. The Greeks will be shocked by Alexander's use of the early format (ὁ δεῖνα πῶ δεῖνι τάδε λέγει instead of χαίρειν: Plut. *Phoc.* 17, Aelian. *VH* 1. 25, but already Duris and

letter from Emporion dated to c.500 (appendix 1, no. 23), and at the opening of another letter from the same area, dated to the same period (no. 25); but in both instances the verb is in the second person imperative, and in the second letter the sender's name is not given; to find the format expected, it is necessary to wait until the fourth century, with the letters from Panticapaeum (no. 10), from Olbia (no. 12), and from Nikonion (no. 20), all with formulations themselves not altogether completely 'standard'.

The substitution of the imperative (*χαίρε*) by the infinitive (*χαίρειν*, with an intended *λέγει*) marks a significant change. The imperative is a direct address: the text (and through it the person who wrote it) speaks out directly, without any mediation, just as in the early funerary inscriptions, or in the 'epistolary curses' we have seen.¹²⁸ This will not be the case for letters: typically, they are introduced in the third person, and then move to first person speech.¹²⁹ This structure is usually explained by the derivation of the letter from the 'messenger's report'; but on its own this is probably not enough, since some letters maintain the first person throughout, and since the final change to the standard third-person prescript seems to have occurred only in the fourth century, when literacy must have been relatively widespread. Thus, there may have been some other reason: possibly the desire, necessity, or impulse of first marking (or at least acknowledging) a distance, before moving to the first-person speech.

Here, the contrast with the curses appears clearly: even in the curses that present themselves as letters, the speaker speaks always, from the very beginning, in the first person; those curses in which the term *ἐπιστολή* appears are in fact first-person narratives of the sending of a message (*πέμπω*), which is the text itself. The same verb *πέμπω*, in the first person, is used in those curses where a gift is being sent to the underworld gods. Curses are of course an extremely personal mode of expression, even though the name of the sender usually does not—for obvious reasons—appear;¹³⁰ the first person has a performative function. From this perspective, a fascinating connection appears between the epistolary curses (all coming from Attica) and what has been interpreted as the 'letter' of Pasion (appendix 1, no. 42, same region and same period), in which, in the commonly accepted interpretation, the sender addresses in the first person a third party

Chares, see below, 165), because by then the prescript with *χαίρειν* had imposed itself, and the other format was felt as oriental: Gerhard 1905: 53 and n. 156, 60–2 (with further references), and Koskenniemi 1956: 156. On the various formats in use by the Macedonian chancery, and in particular the distinction between letter and *diagramma*, see the illuminating study of Mari 2006.

¹²⁸ The inscriptions may address the passers-by, or the dead person: compare CEG i, 127; 396; CEG i, 522; 530. 1 and 4; 655; 719; 822 (*χαίρε*); CEG i, 4; 80; 108. 1; 162; CEG ii, 487; 492; 520. 5; 677; 861. 2; 868. 1 and 6; 901 (*χαίρετε*), with Stehle 1997: 312–17 (on the communicative aspects of epigrams, without focus on *χαίρειν*), and Day 2010: 237–8, 246–53 (focusing on the semantics of *χαίρειν*).

¹²⁹ Besides the instances of *χαίρε*, the presence of a nominative/vocative where later the prescript will be found is also a form of direct address (so in appendix 1, no. 7, 'Protagoras! . . .'; in no. 18; in no. 31, possibly because this is but a short note; the same applies to the Attic graffiti nos. 35, 36, and 37).

¹³⁰ Exceptions (most, it would seem, from erotic curses) where the name of the sender is given are listed in Versnel 1991: 63 and n. 16: DTA 231, 260, 261, 270, 271; SGD 151–3, 155, 156, 158–61; see also Jordan SGD, pp. 186 and 191; possibly also SGD 91, and an unpublished fifth-century *defixio* from Apollonia, 'written by Aristokrate daughter of Deidis', mentioned in Slavova 2009: 207–8 (cf. BE 2010 no. 434).

([Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαιάρχ<ωι> ἐπιστέλλω Σατυρίωνα τιμωρήσασθαι κτλ), asking him to punish other persons.¹³¹ The context seems to be a legal one, just as was the case for one category of curses, which may explain the use of this type of language in a letter; alternatively, this may well be a curse, written as a letter ([Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαιάρχο ἐπιστέλλω Σατυρίωνα τιμωρήσασθαι κτλ), but presenting the remarkable oddity of a curser naming himself.

What emerges from this comparison is the original affinity, from the point of view of the enunciation, of both curses (*qua* messages to the Underworld gods) and letters; funerary and dedicatory epigrams, where forms of *χαίρειν* are also used in direct addresses to the passers-by, also fall in this group. But relatively quickly the streams diverged, and letter writing settled for an impersonal, third-person opening, which maintained some distance and was clearly distinguished from spoken language, while directness remained a hallmark of curses and funerary inscriptions.

¹³¹ See above, n. 88, and the discussion in appendix 1, no. 42.

Writing and Letter Writing

Representations

Any treatment of a society's cultural life that limits itself to the socio-economic is bound to give only a very partial picture. All the more so in a situation in which there is no guarantee that the documentary evidence we possess corresponds, proportionally, to the actual types of documents in use (this principle applies especially to the archaic and classical period, but it is fundamentally valid for all of ancient Greek history). Let us then enter the terrain of representations and expand on the discussion of the early diffusion, social status, and uses of writing conducted in the previous chapter by looking at a specific group of representations of writing: those dealing with its introduction or invention.¹ I propose first to plot the changes in representations and aetiologies of writing tout court, and then to look more specifically at the aetiologies of letter writing; a discussion of the way the Greeks perceived and explained the introductory formula (the prescript) will conclude this part. My contention is that this may reveal to us something of the way letter writing was conceived.

Famously, the Homeric poems do not mention writing—with one notorious exception.² In what amounts to the first allusion to a form of writing in Greek literature, the writing at issue is epistolary. In the sixth book of the *Iliad*, Glaucus recounts how Proetus, king of Tiryns, sent his ancestor Bellerophon to Lycia with a letter, in response to the lying accusations of his wife Anteia:

πέμπε δέ μιν Λυκίηνδε, πόρεν δ' ὃ γε σήματα λυγρά,
 γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῶ θυμοφθόρα πολλά
 δεῖξαι δ' ἡνώγει ᾧ πενθερῷ, ὅφρ' ἀπόλοιτο.
 (Il. 6. 168–70; cf. σήμα, Il. 6. 176 and 178)

¹ See Svenbro 1993 for a wide-ranging panorama of Greek representations of writing; interesting discussion of Greek perceptions of writing in Vasunia 2001: 136–55, and esp. 148–51 for its inventors; Vasunia, however, puts together all forms of writing, and suggests, following Steiner 1994, that the craft was viewed negatively.

² The other Iliadic passage where a reference to writing has been suspected is *Iliad* 7. 175–89: the heroes mark tokens (κλήρον ἐσημῆναντο ἑκάστος) and put them in a helmet; a herald (κήρυξ) then goes around showing the lot that came out, until Ajax recognizes it (γυνῶ δὲ κλήρου σήμα ἰδὼν) and rejoices. Here, the marks on the tokens are simply signs, recognizable by the person who made them, but devoid of any meaning for the others; they function as symbolic signs, as a language (Ajax rejoices), but cannot be confused with writing. See Heubeck 1979: 127–8; and Steiner 1994: 10–16, who stresses the importance of differentiating between messages based on linguistic communication and *sema*.

He sent him to Lycia, and gave him baneful signs, which he inscribed in a folded tablet, many and soul-destroying, and told him to show them to his father-in-law, so that he might perish.

The strangeness of this unique reference to writing had already excited the curiosity of ancient readers, who tried to solve the difficulty by suggesting that the signs, *semata*, scratched on the tablets were *eidola*, drawings, or else pictographic symbols, *ἑρὰ ζώδια*, such as those that Egyptians used to explain things (so schol. Hom. *Il.* 6. 168–9a; one of the meanings of the Greek verb *γράφω* is ‘to draw’).³ Even so, these signs would have been designed to transmit a specific message—they would imply communicating through writing, even if not through alphabetic writing. It is true that, as Steiner has pointed out, there is an interesting shift in focus from the baneful signs (*σήματα λυγρά*), prominent at the moment of the inscription on the tablet, to the tablet as a sign (*σήμα*) in itself, received by the Lycian king (*Il.* 6. 176 and esp. 178 *σήμα κακόν*).⁴ But ultimately, the transmission of the message works; it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the passage refers to some kind of writing, given the unequivocal reference to a tablet (a folded one moreover!)⁵ How to explain this unique allusion to writing?

This story combines two well-known and fairly widespread folkloric motifs, attested separately also in the Old Testament: the married woman spurned by a potential lover who tries to exact revenge for the rejection through her husband;⁶ and the letter that enjoins the addressee to kill the bearer, as in the story of David and Uriah (2 Sam. 11) and in the Sumerian Sargon legend.⁷ In the first, the letter accomplishes the trick: Uriah gives it to Joab; he is assigned by the latter to a

³ Detailed discussion of the scholia—and of the entire episode—in Heubeck 1979: 128–43; see also Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 124–5. On *graphein* in Homer, see Heubeck 1979: 141, who highlights the difference between the use of *grapho* in the Proetus–Bellerophon story (Proetus writes *semata* on a tablet) and all the other uses of (*epi*-)*graphein* in the Homeric poems (where the object of *graphein* is the support of the incision). For a wider contextualization see Saussy 1996.

⁴ Important discussion in Steiner 1994: 10–17; the main points already in Heubeck 1979: 139–40.

⁵ So Burkert 1983. Mylonas Shear 1998 makes a strong case for the existence of Mycenaean wooden folding tablets; this need not imply that we should see in the Homeric folded tablet a reminiscence of Mycenaean literacy—the tablet might also reflect contemporary Near Eastern practices. Wooden writing boards are attested in the Greek area already around 800 bc: Payton 1991; Symington 1991.

⁶ Cf. the story of the wife of Potiphar, Gen. 39: 1–20 (the ‘Zuleika theme’, following the name given to the woman by the rabbinic tradition, discussed in West 1997: 365); the Egyptian story of the ‘Two brothers’, known by a papyrus dated to 1225 bc (Pritchard 1969: 23–5); and, in the Greek tradition, the instances discussed in Longo 1981: 62–6, and below, ch. 5.

⁷ Cf. Burkert 1983: 52, who makes the point that a ‘femme fatale’ (Bathsheba) has a role in the story of David and Uriah as well. For the Sargon story see Alster 1987: 169–73, West 1997: 365–7, and Black, Cunningham, Robson, and Zolyomi 2004: 40–4 (whose translation I follow). The *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Thompson 1955–8) lists under K 978 (a man bears a letter enjoining that he be put to death) Irish, Icelandic, Spanish, Jewish, Indian, Buddhist, and Japanese traditions; the variant K 511 (letter ordering the death of the bearer, modified during its transmission, so that the bearer is instead honoured) comprises *Il.* 6. 168 ff. (the *grammata lugra* of Bellerophon—although the letter is not modified, the hero indeed survives), and the Danish Hamlet legend, told by Saxo Grammaticus, *Hist. Dan.* 3–4, 86–106, and rendered famous by its Shakespearean reworking. Yet another variant is listed under K 1612 (letter resulting in the death of the sender), and H 918 (letter imposing on its bearer heroic deeds). Further Greek parallels in Longo 1981: 62–6, and below, 140, 170–1, 222–3.

dangerous task, as requested in the letter by David; and he dies. In the Sargon legend, a narrative going back to the Old Babylonian period (or possibly even the Ur III period) and recounting the rise to power of Sargon, the focus on the deception allowed by sealed writing is much stronger, and the use of an envelope is explicitly mentioned as part of the plot:

In those days, although writing words on tablets existed, putting tablets into envelopes did not yet exist. King Ur-Zababa despatched Sargon, the creature of the gods, to Lugal-zage-si in Unug with a message written on clay, which was about murdering Sargon. (B 53–6)⁸

The connection with the story of Bellerophon is fairly close: for if in the *Iliad* no stress is put on either the use of writing or the existence of envelopes, the message given to Bellerophon by Proetus is written on a folded tablet (ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ). Clearly, the folding here has the same function as an envelope: it is needed to keep Bellerophon in the dark as to the content of the message. Similarly, it is clear that the success of Ur-Zababa's plan depends entirely on the fact that Sargon, the messenger, will not be aware of the content of the letter. So although this is not spelt out (being probably lost in the missing part), either envelopes were invented for the occasion, the message was enclosed in one, and Sargon opened it; or there were yet no envelopes, the message was simply on a tablet, and Sargon took advantage of this deficiency in communication.⁹ Interestingly, a femme fatale may have been part of the Sargon story too: the text we have is incomplete, but tablet C opens with a fragmentary reference to a woman: 'With the wife of Lugal-Zagesi [...] | She . . . [----] her femininity as a shelter [-]'.¹⁰

Is the connection between Sargon and letter writing purely accidental—i.e., linked to the specific needs of this story, as is evidently the case for the Bellerophon story? Possibly; it is, however, suggestive that in detailing Sargon's initiatives, the *Chronicle of Early Kings* notes that 'He stationed his court officials at intervals of five double hours.' This same detail appears also in the neo-Assyrian omen collection: '[omen] of Sargon who put his palace in order, stationed (his court officials) at intervals of five double hours, [...] the young men stood before him and said, 'Let it not be so, whither should we go?''.¹¹ Sargon apparently set up

⁸ Note also that the first attempt of Sargon at eliminating his cup-bearer relies on the help of his chief smith, Beliš-tikal, characterized by him as 'man of my choosing, who can write tablets' (B 30); writing is important throughout the story. The chief smith is asked to throw Sargon and a bronze hand-mirror into a mould for statues: substitution is clearly at work here.

⁹ Invention of envelope: Alster 1987; differently Cooper 1993: 18 n. 36, who deems it impossible that the invention of envelopes should be attributed to Ur-Zababa, and who proposes that because envelopes were not in use, Sargon was able to read the letter and escape from the trap. See also Komoróczy 1975 (text, translation, and discussion); Cooper and Heimpel 1983.

¹⁰ TRS 73 rev., see Cooper and Heimpel 1983: 77; Black, Cunningham, Robson, and Zolyomi 2004: 44.

¹¹ *Chronicle of Early Kings*, Grayson 1975: 153 (Chron. 20, 7); neo-Assyrian Omen collection: King 1907: 32 (omen no. 3, viii, 28–9), with Grayson 1975: 236. On Sargon (king 2334–2279 bc following the Sumerian king's list) see Grayson 1975: 235–6 (collection of sources). On the relationship between the omen collections (earlier) and the *Chronicle of Early Kings*, Grayson 1975: 45–6. The royal correspondence of the Assyrian kings (published in the *State Archives of Assyria* series; see <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/royalcorrespondence/>>) shows the importance of communication for the eighth-century bc Assyrian empire.

a chain of provinces throughout his kingdom administered by his own officials stationed at short intervals from one another—a measure that chimes in well with the role of courier bearing letters attributed to him by the tradition (the officials could have passed the letters from post to post).

The story of Bellerophon¹² may thus have been originally a Near Eastern story that at some point entered the Greek world, possibly through a Hittite mediation;¹² it certainly sits uneasily in the Homeric poems as we have them, since writing is, in the epos, downplayed as much as possible. But it was fully accepted as Greek by the Greek audiences of the eighth century and later; and it proved extremely productive. As Rosenmeyer points out, the story of the letter sent by Proetus to destroy Bellerophon¹³ encapsulates the three major themes that will colour letter writing through most of Greek literature—and indeed Greek history: the deceitful letter that causes the death of its carrier; the association between letters and deceitful women; and the basic notion of a ‘letter of recommendation’, something very present in all ancient manuals on letter writing.¹³

Because of the importance of this letter as a ‘blueprint’ for later perceptions of epistolary communication, its position in the wider context of epic communication is worth further analysis. Communication in the epos happens through face-to-face speech, or through mediators, sent by someone to transmit a message to someone else. Mediators comprise figures such as the ἄγγελοι (messengers) or the κήρυκες (heralds), divine or human, but also other characters who accomplish the same function; a letter is also an instrument of mediated communication. Although mediated communication of the type just described has a fairly important place in the epos (and in the Greek world), one may, within limits, subscribe to Bassi’s statement, that Greek epic poetry, and the *Iliad* in particular, ‘validates an idealized mode of direct first-person speech between elite males, in opposition to mediated speech (including oral and written messages) as suspect and feminine’.¹⁴ It would certainly be excessive to mark all epic instances of mediated communication as feminine and deceptive; but the unique epic instance of a communication mediated through writing is clearly associated with deceptiveness, and if man-to-man combat and face-to-face speech constitute one end of a spectrum, Proetus and his secret message are clearly at the opposite end.¹⁵

The fact that a letter is the first instance of writing in Greek literature might lead one to suppose that letter writing played an important role in Greek aetiologies of writing; yet this does not seem to have been the case. The first author to mention the invention of writing seems to have been Stesichorus, who in the second book

¹² Oriental story: Powell 1997: 28. Katz 1998 argues for an Indo-European derivation of Bellerophon’s name, to be interpreted as ‘slayer of the eel-snake’ and connected to Hittite Illuyankaš.

¹³ Rosenmeyer 2001: 42–4. The tragic versions of the story of Bellerophon are discussed below, 222–3.

¹⁴ Bassi 1998: 44, and 55–9, where Bassi argues that the decision to send a written message reflects Proetus’ diminutive masculinity (already challenged by his wife’s love for another man). Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 122–3 point out that ‘Anteia is the only character whose words Glaucus reports verbatim’, and contrast this with the rebuke addressed by Telemachus to Penelope, Hom. *Od.* 1. 356–9, ‘speaking is a concern of men’: Anteia is in many ways exceptional.

¹⁵ More on mediated communication and its characteristics below, 101–3. Llewelyn 1994: 22 highlights a widespread anxiety connected to letter writing in the ancient world: the earliest references to letters in the Septuagint involve arrangements for the death of third persons (of Uriah; of Naboth, in 1 Kings 21: 9–10, a letter written by a woman; and of the seventy sons of Ahab, in 2 Kings 10: 1–10).

of his *Oresteia* attributed this feat to Palamedes; we do not know in what context writing was mentioned (we owe our information to a fleeting reference in the scholia to Dionysius Thrax), but in a work focused on Orestes, an allusion rather than an extended narrative is to be expected, and this implies a pre-existing narrative, of which we have no trace.¹⁶ Otherwise, stories about the invention of writing begin to proliferate at the end of the sixth century and at the beginning of the fifth; in striking contrast to the Near Eastern accounts (e.g. the story of Enmerkar) and to ‘conventional wisdom’, these accounts do not seem to have much to do with letter-writing.¹⁷ It is a pity that for the early period we have only fragments of what may have been fairly extensive discussions of the origin of the alphabet, because this makes it very difficult to locate exactly the moment in which, and the reasons why, specific developments took place. It is at any rate clear that at some point, the traditions narrating of a foreign and very ancient origin of the alphabet began to be combined with those highlighting the role played by Greek culture heroes, through positing a number of intermediary steps; similarly, from the fifth century onwards, communication appears as one of the reasons for the invention of writing, beside the preservation of memories. Relatively early, and at any rate already in the fourth century BC, these stories were combined in what Jeffery has aptly named ‘the Theory of Division’—a parcelling up of the invention among multiple inventors, who each added a few letters to an initial group, in the typical way in which divergent genealogies and stories were also reconciled.¹⁸ In what follows, Hellenistic accounts of the invention of writing will not be discussed: by the end of the fifth century, stories that connect the invention of writing to letter writing are already in existence, and our focus will be on how these narratives situate themselves in respect to other accounts of the invention of writing.

3.1. WRITING AS A CRAFT IMPORTED FROM OUTSIDE THE GREEK WORLD

If looked at from the angle of the function attributed to the craft, the ancient Greek accounts of the invention of writing can be roughly organized into three

¹⁶ Schol. Dion. Thr. 183. 14 = PMG F 213; see Jeffery 1967: 152. Note that the *stoicheia* of Stesichorus may have been just numbers. Kleingünther 1933: 28 suggests that the attribution of inventions to Palamedes (besides writing, also measures and weights) may have been an Argive innovation of the seventh century, aimed at asserting Argive priority in respect to Aeginetan and Lydian developments in the same area; he moreover links this with the reforms attributed to Pheidon of Argos—there is indeed an interesting cluster around Argos.

¹⁷ Story of Enmerkar and ‘conventional wisdom’: above, 23–4 and nn. 1–3. Text and translation of the main sources on the origins of the alphabet are reproduced in appendix 2. General account of the theories of the Greeks on the origin of their alphabet: Jeffery 1967; Garcea 2002; Schneider 2004. One cannot but agree with Heubeck (1979: 108): the Greeks already in the sixth and fifth century had no clear notion of where their alphabet had come from.

¹⁸ Jeffery 1967: 155. Garcea 2002 organizes most ancient sources into a tradition that assumed an initial Greek alphabet of sixteen letters, and a tradition that counted eighteen primitive characters. Schneider 2004 offers an extremely useful review of the material.

groups. A first group is constituted by those stories, first attested in the early Milesian writers (Anaximander, Dionysius, Hecataeus), as well as, famously, in Herodotus, that assert a foreign origin of writing, and that do not seem to attribute any specific, well-defined function to the new craft.¹⁹ The moment of the transmission of writing to the Greeks is located in the heroic age; the craft is seen as having been invented in Egypt or Phoenicia, with Assyria being added to the possibilities only later. In the role of mediators are Danaus or Cadmus, the Phoenicians as a group, or also Phoenix son of Agenor and brother of Cadmus; the transmission to the Greeks takes place in either Thebes or the Argolid. The figures of the inventors are rather obscure, and at any rate do not present any personal characteristics that might make them likely candidates for such an invention. The use made by the Ionians of terms such as *φοινικία* and *φοινικογραφέω*, attested in two early-fifth-century inscriptions from Teos in Ionia and indicating, respectively, the letters of the alphabet and the act of writing, will certainly have oriented interpretation and stimulated the aetiological imagination (note also the use of *ποινικάζεν* and *ποινικαστάς* in two late-sixth-century inscriptions from Crete).²⁰ But the outcome of the quest to justify these designations could wildly diverge, leading to the Phoenicians, to the use of red paint, or to the habit of writing on palm leaves;²¹ the existence of such terms thus is not in itself sufficient to explain the circulation of narratives of an oriental, and especially Egyptian, origin of writing. The reason why these foreign figures are linked to writing must then be their provenance from civilizations perceived as extremely ancient. At play here are the early and dense contacts between Ionia and Egypt, from the settlement at Naukratis to the movements of Greek mercenaries to the travels of Hecataeus, and the notion of the very ancient wisdom of Egypt: Danaus provides the mythical link between Egypt and Greece.

¹⁹ Milesians: Anaximander *FGrH* 9 F 3, Dionysius *FGrH* 687 F 1, Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F 20, with focus on Danaus; Herodotus 5. 57–61, on Cadmus. Phoenicians: Soph. *Poimenēs* F 514 Radt. Cadmus and/or Phoenicians: schol. Dion. Thr. 183. 1 (Ephorus, *FGrH* 70 F 105a), 184. 20 (*FGrH* 70 F 105b), 190. 19–20; Clem. Alex. *Str.* 1, 16, 75. 1 (*FGrH* 70 F 105c); Dion. Scytobr., *FGrH* 32 F 8 (D.S. 3. 67. 1); D.S. 5. 58. 3; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 4. 259–64. The Egyptian Menes is also introduced among the inventors by the Athenian Anticlides: *FGrH* 140 F 11a and b = Plin. *NH* 7. 193 and schol. Dion. Thr. 183. 11. The context in which Anticlides mentioned the invention is lost; but the reference to Phoroneus makes it likely that in what followed, Danaus was introduced as the mediator to Greece. In the case of Theuth (Plato, *Phaedr.* 274c and *Phileb.* 18b), there is a purpose to the invention, although Plato disagrees; but it is remembrance, not long-distance communication. See further appendix 2.

²⁰ *Φοινικία*: in the *Teiorum dirae* (480–450 BC), M.–L. 30, 35–41. *Φοινικογραφέω*: at l. 20 of a similar curse inscription from Teos, also dated to 480–450 BC, and published in Hermann 1981 (SEG 31, 985). Crete: cf. the so-called contract of the scribe Spensithios (SEG 27, 631, from Afrati/Lyttos), in charge of *ποινικάζεν δὲ [π]όλι καὶ μνημονεύειν τὰ δαμόσια*; and IC II xii 11, from Eleutherna. Other inscriptions referring to *phoinikēia* / *phoinikika* include: IG ii² 1456.42–3, an inventory from the Athenian acropolis dated post 341/340, mentioning an ivory gorgoneion *γράμμα*[-]*[τ]α Φοινικικὰ ἔχο[ν]* (cf. IG ii² 1485, inventory of end of fourth century BC); a reference in the Lindian chronicle, *FGrH/BNJ* 532 F 2 (B) ll. 15–17, to a cauldron dedicated by Cadmus and inscribed in Phoenician letters; IG xii 2, 96 and IG xii 2, 97, both from Mytilene in Lesbos, both preserving references to a *phoinikographos*, in a (fragmentary) context where a *grammateus* also appears, besides a tantalizing connection to Hermes, marked especially in the second inscription: *ὁ φ[οινικό]γραφος ἔρμαι* (see Labarre 1996: 168–9). Cf. also Hesych. ε 1799 *ἐκφοινίξαι*. Discussion in Chantraine 1972; Corcella 1986.

²¹ Schol. Dion. Thr. 184. 23. For the palm leaves see Ahl 1967, who suggests that they may refer to Mycenaean tablets shaped as palm leaves (and not to Phoenician palms).

Importantly, these stories share the characteristic that no particular function is ever given to writing: it is simply invented, or rather transmitted. Some attention, in particular in the long Herodotean account concerning Cadmus, is given to the relationship between writing and the language it notates (as one would expect, for a craft imported from another civilization), and to the changes that writing underwent in time, described here with the verbs *μεταβάλλω* and *μεταρρυθμίζω*.²² The main contribution of the Greeks is thus seen in the change of *rhythmos* imposed on pre-existing material; once again, it is important to stress that throughout the relatively long Herodotean excursus, not a word is spent on the function of the new craft; the same applies to the other narratives—with one exception, a fragment of Critias, whose interpretation is disputed.

In the context of an elegiac poem listing specialties of cities or peoples, Critias mentions the Phoenicians as the inventors of the letters, qualifying the latter with the adjective *ἀλεξίλογα*, a *hapax*: ‘And the Phoenicians invented the letters *alexiloga*’, *Φοίνικες δ’ εὖρον γράμματα ἀλεξίλογα* (Critias D.–K. 88 F 2. 10 = Athen. 1. 28 BC). Three main interpretations have been advanced, all hinging on the specific meaning to be attributed to the *hapax alexilogos*. Some understand that the Phoenicians discovered the letters ‘that defend the *logos*’, by preserving it; others give to *logos* a pregnant meaning, and understand that the letters defend the *logos* by helping men to think and speak. In both cases, writing would be subservient, or at any rate complementary, to spoken discourse. The third interpretation takes *ἀλεξίλογα* to mean ‘that defend from speech’, thus pitting writing against speech (permanency, clarity, possibility of checking a text and thinking consistently, as it were, as opposed to verbiage).²³ It is a pity that the interpretation of this single verse is so disputed, because it could give us a definite indication on what a specific individual, the Athenian Critias, active in the second half of the fifth century BC, considered the main use of writing. While the overall evidence from the fifth century speaks for an interpretation privileging the use of writing to preserve memory, the doubt remains that the oligarchic Critias, from whom one might expect the odd sly gibe against the ‘face to face’ culture of Athenian democracy, may have been playing on the meanings of a term, *alexiloga*, probably coined by him. At any rate, here Critias, unlike most of the narratives linking writing with the foreign origins, qualifies the invention; but this is an exception, and possibly due to the fact that the invention is framed within a list of civilizing discoveries. Later accounts preserve the general scheme outlined above, but combine it with stories that give the initial role to Greek heroes or gods: the Greeks were the first to use writing, having received it from the gods; but after the flood, they forgot about it (all written monuments would also have perished), so that writing—again a very ‘neutralized’ writing—had to be reintroduced from the outside.²⁴

²² Hdt. 5. 57–61; see Jeffery 1967: 153; Corcella 1986: 54–5. For the meaning of ‘change of rhythm’ (not shape of individual letters, but graphic sequence close to the oral movement of the voice) see Calame 1993: 788–95; Magini 1998: 23–4.

²³ For the first interpretation, see e.g. Fantuzzi 1984; for the second, Pfeiffer 1968: 24; for the third (a somewhat Derridean reading of Critias), Ferlauto 1990b. In the following hexameter Thebes is mentioned, as the place that first produced a chariot seat: mental association over a figure such as Cadmus?

²⁴ This is e.g. the version of D.S. 5. 37 and of the *scholia Vaticana* in Dion. Thr. 185. 24–186. 2 (see appendix 2); it is very close to the late (from the first millennium onwards) Mesopotamian accounts, as attested in Berossos (*FGrH/BNJ* 680 F 4).

3.2. WRITING AS THE INVENTION OF A GREEK CULTURE HERO

A second group is formed by the stories ascribing the discovery to a Greek culture hero or god. The names of the inventors are up to a point interchangeable, and even include some historical figures: Prometheus, Orpheus, Musaeus, the Muses, Hermes, Sisyphus, and Palamedes, as well as Pythagoras and Simonides all appear, in different periods and contexts.²⁵ The links between these characters and writing are various. Sometimes, the discovery is presented as part of a more general civilizing mission (Prometheus, Palamedes, Hermes); alternatively, the peculiar qualities of the inventor (e.g. cunning intelligence for Hermes or Sisyphus, memory in the case of Simonides, song for Orpheus and Musaeus) explain his connection to the craft of writing. In this group, a focus on function is much more prominent, possibly because writing, when it appears in this context, is mostly presented not per se, autonomously, but as part of a series of civilizing inventions; the new instrument, the letters, primarily enable the preservation of memories, and promote the arts. Thus for instance the Titan Prometheus claims, in a famous speech of the homonymous drama:

ἦν δ' οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς οὔτε χεῖματος τέκμαρ
οὔτ' ἀνθεμῶδους ἦρος οὔτε καρπίμου
θέρους βέβαιον, ἀλλ' ἄτερ γνώμης τὸ πᾶν
ἔπρασσον, ἔστε δὴ σφιν ἀντολὰς ἐγὼ
ἄστρον ἐδειξα τὰς τε δυσκρίτους δύσεις.
καὶ μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων,
ἐξηῦρον αὐτοῖς, γραμμάτων τε συνθέσεις,
μνήμην ἀπάντων, μουσομήτορ' ἐργάνην. (Aesch. PV 454–61)²⁶

They had no reliable sign either of winter or of flowery spring or of fruitful summer, but managed everything without judgement, until I showed them the risings of the stars and their settings, difficult to distinguish. Yes, and number, too, most eminent of sciences, I discovered for them, and the assemblages of letters, memory of everything, occupation that gives birth to the Muses.

Prometheus gives men tools to orient themselves, in space and time, by teaching them to discern the rising and the setting of the stars, the science of numbers, and the assemblage of letters, all grouped under the heading of *σοφίσματα* (v. 459). Writing, intended as the ability to assemble letters, is defined by its potential for memory and as something that helps produce poetry: it

²⁵ On first inventors see Kleingünther 1933; Kurke 1999, esp. 248–54; and Gera 2003: 112–81, esp. 113–25. Interchangeability: in Aesch. PV 460–1 Prometheus is the inventor of writing; but a scholion to Aesch. PV 458 (= TrGF 3 F 182a) states that elsewhere Aeschylus had named Palamedes as the inventor of these same arts. The scholion may, however, refer here only to the teaching of the movements of the stars.

²⁶ The manuscript tradition of v. 461 is divided between *μνήμην ἀπάντων* and *μνήμην θ' ἀπάντων*. The second reading severs the connection of 461 with 460: Prometheus would have taught men the assemblage of letters, as well as memory, mother of the Muses' art. Detailed discussion in Ferlauto 1990a. On the whole, the arguments for the first reading (correspondence of *καὶ μὴν* at 459 and *τε* at 460, balancing of the sentences with each time the invention and an apposition) appear convincing.

effectively replaces Mnemosyne as the mother of the Muses.²⁷ The use of *ἐργάνη* to qualify the memory resulting from writing is particularly interesting, because it can be related to the emergence of a language of ‘making’ song that, as Ford has shown, places the emphasis on the construction of poetry, rather than on its performance.²⁸ It is worth noting here, however, that paradoxically, although the story attributing the discovery of the alphabet to Prometheus has come to dominate Western tradition, it is itself hardly traditional: the very detailed list of his gifts to mankind has been often considered an Aeschylean innovation, modelled on (some of) the inventions more commonly attributed to Palamedes.²⁹

From the fifth century onwards, the invention of writing is also attributed to Orpheus, Linus, and Musaeus.³⁰ The reason for the invention is, in the case of Orpheus, probably poetry, because of his connection with the Muses (the same applies to Musaeus), as well as wisdom. This is explicitly stated in an epigram, supposedly inscribed on the tomb of Orpheus and quoted in a speech attributed to Alcidas:

γράμματα μὲν δὴ πρῶτος Ὀρφεὺς ἐξήνεγκε, παρὰ Μουσῶν μαθὼν, ὥς καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ
μνήματι αὐτοῦ δηλοῖ τὰ ἐπιγράμματα·

Μουσῶν πρόπολον τῇδ' Ὀρφέα Θρήκες ἔθηκαν,
ὃν κτάνεν ὑψιμέδων Ζεὺς ψολόεντι βέλει
Οἰάγρου φίλον νιόν, ὃς Ἡρακλῇ ἐδίδαξεν,
εὐρῶν ἀνθρώποις γράμματα καὶ σοφίην. ([Alcid.] Od. 24)

Orpheus first introduced the letters, having learnt them from the Muses, as is shown also by the epigram on his tomb:

²⁷ See Nieddu 2004: 47. Ferlauto 1990a suggests interpreting *γράμματα* as *στοιχεῖα* (meaningful elements rather than purely graphic ones), and understands this to mean ‘combinations of letters articulated orally’: the Titan would have given mankind an articulated language, able to remember everything and to produce poetry. While such an interpretation is unlikely (if only because slightly later in the play there is a pointed allusion to the metaphorical writing of the Titan’s instructions by Io, in the tablets of her mind), the phonic quality of the Greek alphabet renders it close to a transcription of spoken language, and many early Greek descriptions of writing characterize it as a double of spoken language: besides Ferlauto 1990a, see Calame 1993 (on the *rhythmos* of the letters in Hdt. 5. 61); Magini 1998.

²⁸ Ford 2002: 131–9; for tragedy, see esp. 137–8. As Piccaluga 1988: 41 notes, Prometheus does not ‘create’ the letters: he shows how to put together (or how to understand) elements pre-existing in nature.

²⁹ Kleingünther 1933: 83 and n. 38; Sommerstein 2000: 122; see also below. Prometheus’ connection with writing depends solely on the homonymous drama. On the evolution of the figure of Prometheus see Saïd 1985: 115–30 and 131–54; Gantz 1993: 153–66; West 1997: 581; Gera 2003: 120–2. The question of the drama’s authenticity is not important here; West 1990: 51–72 denies Aeschylean authorship, but arguments based on inconsistencies or structural incoherence are hardly convincing (see Saïd 1985 for a very different approach). The date to c.430 BC endorsed by Sommerstein 2000: 121 would align the play with the interest in writing that emerges during this period. Jeffery 1967: 155 n. 9 stresses the uniqueness of the *mise en scène* of Prometheus in the *Prometheus vincitus*: ‘clearly the poet did not intend that the great Titan, transformed by him from a minor cult-hero of Attic potters into the first civilizing force of mankind, should be seriously ranked by later scholars as a claimant with the mortals Palamedes and the rest’.

³⁰ Linus: Boardman 1992, Bremmer 1999; Musaeus: Kauffmann-Samaras 1992, Heinze 1999; Orpheus: Linforth 1931 and 1941; Calame 2000; Steiner 1994: 194–201; Graf and Johnston 2007. For the iconography, see Garezu 1994 and 2009. Orpheus teacher of Linus: schol. Eur. *Rhes.* 895 = Asclepiades of Tragilus *FGrH* 12 F 6b, D.S. 3. 67. 2; teacher of Musaeus: D.S. 4. 25. 1.

The Thracians buried Orpheus here, the servant of the Muses | whom lofty-ruling Zeus slew with the smoking thunderbolt | the dear son of Oiaeros, who taught Herakles, | having discovered writing and wisdom for mankind.

While the date of the speech is uncertain, the—clearly fictional—epigram could have been composed in the Athenian milieu of the last quarter of the fifth century;³¹ we have from that period numerous testimonies of an association between Orpheus and books or writing, both literary and iconographic.³²

Versions that portray writing as a craft imported from the outside had localized the place of the transmission mainly in Argos or Thebes. The ‘Orphic’ version of the invention of writing is not really localized: the epigram adduced in its support had been inscribed on Orpheus’ tomb, in Thrace, or so Alcidas states, but it circulated (and was possibly created) in Athens; it does not say anything about the place of the invention. The same lack of localization is apparent in the version in which writing is given to mankind by Prometheus, or in those that set the invention in the Greek camp at Troy; it is also reflected in the fact that in these stories the letters are simply called *γράμματα*.

For these traditions had to contend with the theory of the Milesians, that writing had originated in older civilizations (such as Egypt, or later, Assyria); similarly, Herodotus had claimed that the name *phoinikeia* reflected an ancient reality and was to be explained by the Phoenician origin of writing. When this observation imposed itself, the problem became to avoid that name, or to explain it away in a Greek way. As a result, a number of strategies were put in place that managed to retain the invention on Greek ground. Thus, in discussing the entry *phoinikeia grammata* (‘Phoenician letters’), the *Suda* (ϕ 787) and Photius (ϕ 652 Porson) preserve the following information:

Λυδοὶ καὶ Ἴωνες τὰ γράμματα ἀπὸ Φοῖνικος τοῦ Ἀγήνορος τοῦ εὐρόντος· τούτοις δὲ ἀντιλέγουσι Κρήτες, ὡς εὗρεθῇ ἀπὸ τοῦ γράφειν ἐν φοινίκων πετάλοις. (. . .)

Lydians and Ionians say that the letters received their name from Phoenix son of Agenor, who discovered them. But the Cretans disagree with them, saying that the name derives from writing on the leaves of palm-trees. (. . .)

The Ionian and Lydian theories mentioned at the opening of the passage are simply variants of those traditions that linked writing to the Phoenicians. Doing away with Cadmus and concentrating on Phoenix offered the advantage of explaining the word *phoinikeia* as applied to letters through the (Greek) name

³¹ The question of the authorship and date of the *Odyssey*, or, *Against Palamedes* (see O’Sullivan 2008 for a date after the first century AD) has to be kept separate from that of the date of the epigram, on which see Linforth 1931 and Linforth 1941: 15.

³² e.g. Eur. *Hipp.* 954; Eur. *Alc.* 966–9; Plato *Resp.* 2. 364e3–365a3; and four Attic vases, all dated to the second half of the fifth century: hydria Basle, Antikenmuseum BS 481, *LIMC*, s.v. ‘Orpheus’, no. 68; hydria from Attica, now Dunedin (N.Z.), Otago Museum E 48. 266, ARV² 1174. 1, *LIMC*, s.v. ‘Orpheus’, no. 69; red figure oinochoe from Basle, BS 1416, CVA Switzerland 8 (Basel iv), p. 39; cup from Naples, now Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, ARV² 1401. 1, *LIMC*, s.v. ‘Orpheus’, no. 70. Discussion in Schmidt 1972; Steiner 1994: 195–7. Fascinatingly, the connection between the head of Orpheus and writing is taken up in Etruscan iconography, and extended to include Palamedes: see De Puma 2001, and below, n. 63.

of their alleged discoverer rather than from that of a foreign people.³³ But Phoenix son of Agenor, brother of Cadmus and of Europa, may have been felt to be still too close to the Phoenicians: for the discovery of the letters is attributed to quite a few other Greek 'Phoenixes', besides the son of Agenor. According to Duris, the letters owed their name to Phoenix the teacher of Achilles;³⁴ why Duris should have mentioned this in the eighth book of his *Macedonica* is unclear (possibly as an annotation to Macedonian education?) At any rate, for Duris the invention had taken place at the time of the Trojan war. Alexandros of Rhodes, for his part, attributed the invention to another Phoenix, the son of Europa and Pronapes (or Pronapos), who discovered the letters in Crete, as a result of which he was killed out of jealousy by Rhadamanthys.³⁵ The remark about the death of Phoenix at the hands of Rhadamanthys because of his discovery of the letters is interesting: as Schneider remarks, the stories about Palamedes, Prometheus, and Linus show that inventing letters does not always produce positive results for the discoverer.³⁶ Just as interesting is to find that the comic poet Anaxandrides attributed to Rhadamanthys and Palamedes the invention of *geloia*, jokes brought as a contribution to the banquet by those who did not bring any other contribution (the *asymboloi*):³⁷ these accounts are all related to each other. The chronological level is again that of the Trojan war: Pronapes/Pronapos (better known as Pronapides, and usually an Athenian, not a Cretan) was, according to Dionysius Scytobrachion (*FGrH*/BNJ 32 F 8), a contemporary of Orpheus and teacher of Homer, who had used 'Pelagian' letters; his son, who invented 'Phoenician' letters, was a contemporary of Homer.

But local versions circulated as well. These firmly situated the invention of writing on Greek soil—indeed, on a specific part of it. One in particular is worth discussing, because it shows how important a topic writing and its uses were in fifth-century Athens.

In the same entry '*phoinikeia grammata*', the *Suda* and Photius preserve the following information going back to Skamon, a fourth-century historian from Mytilene on the island of Lesbos and author of a work *On Inventions*:

Σκάμων δ' ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν Εὐρημάτων ἀπὸ Φοινίκης τῆς Ἀκταίωνος ὀνομασθῆναι. μυθεύεται δὲ οὗτος ἀρσένων μὲν παίδων ἄπαις, γενέσθαι δὲ αὐτῷ θυγατέρας Ἀγλαυρον, Ἐρσην, Πάνδροσον· τὴν δὲ Φοινίκην ἔτι παρθένον οὖσαν τελευτήσαι· διὸ καὶ Φοινικῆα τὰ γράμματα τὸν Ἀκταίωνα, βουλόμενόν τινος τιμῆς ἀπονείμει τῇ θυγατρὶ. (*FGrH* 476 F 3 = *BNJ* 476 F 3)

³³ For Phoenix son of Agenor and Cadmus see Pherecydes, *FGrH* 3 F 21; M. L. West 1985: 82–3. For the notion (problematic in my opinion) that in a lost Euripidean play (*Phrixos* B, fr. 819 Kannicht) Cadmus might have taken this name after migrating to Greece, having originally been named Phoenix, see Gantz 1993: 209–10.

³⁴ Duris *FGrH*/BNJ 76 F 6 = schol. Dion. Thr. 184. 27–9 (and again anonymously at schol. Dion. Thr. 32. 12–13, 182. 16–17 and 185. 9; see appendix 2.)

³⁵ Schol. Dion. Thr. 184. 29–185. 2 (and again anonymously at schol. Dion. Thr. 192. 7). Jacoby, *ad FGrH* 32 F 8, c. 67, qualifies this as 'Schwindelnotiz' (with a question mark), built on the tradition concerning an Athenian Pronapides (also mentioned in schol. Dion. Thr. 183. 20–1), who would have 'arranged that the letters be written as we write now'.

³⁶ Schneider 2006: 135–6, with further references (but the case of Prometheus is not really similar to the others). See also Piccaluga 1988 for general considerations in this direction.

³⁷ Athen. 14. 614 c (fr. 10 K.–A.): Ἀναξανδρίδης δ' ἐν Γεροντομανίᾳ καὶ εὐρετὰς τῶν γελοίων φησὶ γενέσθαι Ῥαδάμανθυν καὶ Παλαμίδην, λέγων οὕτως· καίτοι πολλοὶ γε ποιοῦμεν. | τὸν ἀσύμβολον εὔρε γελοῖα λέγειν Ῥαδάμανθος καὶ Παλαμίδης.

Skamon, in the second book of his *On Inventions*, says that they were named after Phoenice, the daughter of Actaeon. Legend has it that he was childless when it came to male children, but that to him daughters were born, Aglaurus, Erse, and Pandrosus. But Phoenice died while still a *parthenos*; for this reason Actaeon named the letters 'Phoenician', desiring to bestow some honour upon his daughter.

The scholia to Dionysius Thrax show that the same story was also narrated by two other fourth-century historians, Andron (of Halicarnassus or Ephesus) and Menecrates of Olynthus: it must have enjoyed some diffusion.³⁸

None of the three historians who discussed this story is Athenian; yet the name of the king, Actaeon, and even more so the names of the three other daughters, Aglaurus, Erse, and Pandrosus, point to Athens. Actaeon, the king of Acte (the original name of Attica), is a double of Cecrops, the autochthonous first king of Athens: the two share the same three daughters; moreover, Cecrops, to whom a number of civilizing inventions were attributed, is said by Tacitus to have invented writing.³⁹ But a Phoenice is otherwise unknown: her name was clearly invented to account for the by then common denomination of *phoinikeia* for the early characters of the alphabet. Here, the discoverer, Actaeon, is at the same time a name-giver: he assigned a name to his daughter, and at her death, he assigned her name to the letters (also his daughters, if only metaphorically), so that she might be remembered. Svenbro has brilliantly elucidated the way in which this story was created: it is closely modelled on that of Cadmus, first king of Thebes, and also father of four daughters, Agave, Autonoe, Ino, and Semele. Agave, Ino, and Semele all end, for various individual reasons, in a disastrous way, exactly as the daughters of Cecrops did, when they opened the chest in which Athena had put Erichthonius. As for Autonoe—'she who thinks for herself', the fourth daughter of Cadmus—she had a son, named Actaeon: as Svenbro says, these accounts seem to 'inter-think each other'.⁴⁰ Building a purely Attic story on the Theban model allowed the Athenians to claim priority for the invention of writing by linking it to the very origins of their city. It is impossible to ascertain whether Skamon's account goes back to Hellanicus (according to tradition, his father), who had also written a book *On Discoveries*; but clearly, if the three versions are found in authors of the fourth century BC coming from three fairly different areas of the Greek world, the story must go back to the fifth century, and one would expect it to have originated in an Athenian milieu.

More interesting, but just as difficult to answer, is the question of the meaning of this story. Already Jacoby had seen that this is an Attic invention; should we put it on the same level as those concerning Prometheus and other Greek inventors, or should we assign a special significance to the Athenian origin of the discoverer? And if the latter, as seems likely in view of the elaborate construction of the story,

³⁸ On Skamon see Jacoby, *FGrH* 476 F 3; Kaldellis, *BNJ* 476 F 3. For Andron (of Halicarnassus), see *FGrH* 10 F 9 and Toye, *BNJ* 10 F 9. Bollansée, *FGrHCont* IV, 1005 F 5/6, thinks, however, that schol. Dion. Thr. 184. 20 refers to Andron of Ephesus. Menecrates is mentioned in the same sentence of the scholia to Dionysius Thrax; nothing else is known of him, and the fourth-century date is only an inference deriving from his origin (Olynthus was entirely destroyed in 348 BC) and his association with Skamon and Andron.

³⁹ Svenbro 1993: 81–2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 11. 14. Note that Cicero attributed to Cecrops the invention of funeral rites (*leg.* 2. 63); other civilizing inventions are listed in Scherf 1999.

⁴⁰ Svenbro 1993: 82. On Cadmus' daughters, see Gantz 1993: 472–81.

should this be interpreted as a sign of Skamon's (or rather his source's) goodwill towards Athens? As a rejection of the Ionian or, more specifically, Milesian tradition focused on Danaus? As a rejection of the Theban tradition focused on Cadmus? Would the Athenians, in hearing this story, have been struck by the 'deadly' character of writing, its immobility, or would they rather have perceived it as the living counterpart of the dead girl, as able to produce children for her?

It is impossible to give a definite answer to such questions. Jacoby saw this story as a specific instance of a larger pattern of ad hoc traditions, a pattern according to which already in the fifth century Greek gods, heroes, or humans are occasionally mentioned as inventors of writing (so Prometheus, Palamedes, and possibly even Musaeus) and linked to a definite place, without, however, ever being able to match the Milesian theory of an Egyptian or Phoenician origin of writing.⁴¹ Three more points may be made.

First, the complex manoeuvre of reinventing under an Athenian cover the tradition about the arrival of the letters with Cadmus testifies to a relatively important Athenian involvement with the question of the origins and purposes of writing. Such an involvement is attested both at an ideological level and at a practical one. To start with the latter, Athens underwent a reform of the alphabet in 403 BC that led to the adoption of the Ionian alphabet, a reform that must have occasioned considerable debate.⁴² As for the ideological involvement, Greek drama—and in the fifth century this means mainly Athenian drama—brings to the fore in an unprecedented way writing and its implications, attesting the lively interest of both playwrights and their public in the issue; attention to writing and its uses will remain a constant of drama.⁴³

Second, aetiological tales that identify a Greek origin for writing, be they local or Panhellenic, present a striking difference from the Greek stories that portray writing as a craft imported from the Near East or Egypt, inasmuch as they foreground the uses of writing. Thus, in this specific story, writing is connected with memory after death, with *kleos*; a similar emphasis on writing's ability to preserve memories through time, as well as, less frequently, on writing's creative potential, is typical of the majority of the stories that see in writing the invention of a Greek culture hero.

Third, we may want to read the contrast between the two types of stories as a contrast between a vision of writing as something that is deeply inscribed in the nature of the world, but which ultimately—for this very reason—is beyond human control (and thus often linked to death), and a second, more optimistic vision of writing as a skill acquired from another civilization, imported, and thus 'negotiable', with all the implications this has in terms of alphabetization.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Jacoby, *FGrH* 476 F 3, Kommentar. I would dissent as to the gods: they do not seem to play an important role in the fifth-century traditions on writing. See e.g. Henrichs 2003a and b.

⁴² D'Angour 1993; Grassl 1972 suggests that this is why Herodotus dedicates a long (and polemical) excursus on the arrival of writing in Greece with Cadmus.

⁴³ Detailed discussion of writing in tragedy and comedy below, ch. 5. On the invention of alphabetic letters by an unknown character, in Philemon fr. 10 K.-A., see below, 257–8.

⁴⁴ So Piccaluga 1988: 42–3, who further sees in the second, 'optimistic' approach a 'pathetic attempt to redeem their [the letters'] disturbing alterity'. Piccaluga's is a fascinating structuralist reading of the evidence—some of her associations, however, are forced. For the at times negative connotations of writing (and for the deep and disturbing presence of writing in the world and even within the human body), see also Steiner 1994.

3.3. THE INVENTION OF WRITING AS LETTER WRITING

There are, however, a few stories, all going back to the fifth century BC, in which the main use of writing appears to be that of allowing—or enforcing, as the case may be—communication at a distance: the Euripidean version of the story of Palamedes; the story of the invention of writing by the Oriental queen Atossa, as recounted by Hellanicus; and the narrative of the introduction of writing among the Medes by Deioces, related in the first book of Herodotus' *Histories*.⁴⁵

3.3.1. An Ill-fated Greek Hero: Palamedes

Two factors combine in making Palamedes exceptionally interesting: in some versions of his story, epistolary communication is presented as one of the original purposes of writing (to the point that Detienne has characterized him, strikingly, as 'un héros épistolier');⁴⁶ and long-distance communication has an important role in the plot itself, so that it is possible to see how the invention is considered in this particular light. The story clearly means that epistolary communication is perceived as an important aspect of writing; but what is the sense, what are the values, of the connection between Palamedes and letter writing?

Palamedes is not mentioned in the Homeric poems, a fact much discussed by the ancients—and the moderns. Powell makes much of a Euboean connection, whose existence rests on the fact that Mount Caphareus in Euboea is the place where Nauplius lights the devious fires that will cause the death of the Achaeans by drowning. But the scholia to Euripides' *Orestes* make clear that Euboea is not the home of Nauplius: after having tried to obtain justice at Troy, Nauplius went back home; then, having learnt that the Achaeans were leaving Troy, he went to Euboea, waited for a storm, and lit fires.⁴⁷ The only other sources for a Euboean origin of Palamedes are a passage in an oration of Gregory of Nazianzus, in which a Euboean origin is mentioned, with qualifications; and the remark made by a later commentator on this very passage.⁴⁸ This is rather thin evidence; the Euboean connection is stressed mainly by those scholars who are interested in finding in ancient traditions a reflection of modern theories on the spread of literacy.

⁴⁵ Rosenmeyer's (2001: 26) remark on the 'supposed invention of the imaginary letter in Greek prose by Lesbosax, a rhetorician named by Lucian' (without references) is not correct: Luc. *De Salt.* 69 mentions a Lesbosax interested in the movements of the arms of the dancers; the scholia add that this Lesbosax, a rhetorician, was famous for various rhetorical works, and in particular for his *ἐρωτικά καὶ ἐπιστολαί* ('erotic letters'); but there is no question of invention.

⁴⁶ Detienne 1989: 109. Detailed discussion of the variants in the story of Palamedes in Falcetto 2002; see also Powell (1991: 233–6 and 1996: 25–6), who imagines a 'real', Euboean Palamedes, *grosso modo* contemporary of Homer. See now the excellent discussion of Jenkins 2006.

⁴⁷ Powell 1991: 234; contrast schol. Eur. *Or.* 432.

⁴⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, or. 4, 107 (*Against Julian* 1, 644): *εἴπερ Εὐβοεὺς ὁ Παλαμήδης* (ironically, in view of the use that some try to make of the Euboean origin, not mentioning the invention of writing); and Pseudo-Nonnus, *Scholia mythologica or. 4 hist.* 62. Powell's reference to Eudox. 321 Blass (1997: 234 n. 34) derives I suppose from a misunderstanding of the abbreviation 'Eudok' in Lewy (1897–1902: 1264): this is the *Violarium* of (Pseudo) Eudocia, a sixteenth-century forgery.

An Argive origin of the hero is much better attested: apart from the explicit, although late, statements of Tacitus (*Ann.* 11. 14. 9–11) and of the *Suda* (π 44), a number of other sources point to it, if in a rather indirect way, either through stressing the Argive connections of his father, Nauplius, and of his brother, Oeax, or, as in Pausanias, through reference to local monuments.⁴⁹ The assumption of an Argive origin of the hero makes it possible to connect the emergence of the figure of Palamedes in this area with the stories concerning the invention of coinage, weights, and measures by Pheidon of Argos in the seventh century BC. After all, the inventions that are most stably linked to Palamedes are letters, weights and measures, and *taxeis* (ordering by ranks); and in a context in which various other areas (Lydia and Aegina in particular) contended for the paternity of civilizing inventions, going back to Palamedes may have appeared a valid way of bolstering one's claim to priority.⁵⁰ In this context, it is worth noting that Palamedes, son of Nauplius, is linked to Danaus, one of the heroes to whom Greek tradition attributed the invention of writing. In his *Argonautica* (1. 133–8), Apollonius Rhodius offers a genealogy in which Nauplius (Palamedes' father; Palamedes himself could not of course be mentioned in the *Argonautica*, since the story precedes the Trojan war) descends from Danaus through his father Clytomenaeus, son of Naubolus, son of Lernus, son of Proetus, son of Nauplius, son of Poseidon and Amydone, herself daughter of Danaus. As for Danaus, by the fifth century at the latest he appears in the Greek genealogies as son of Belos.⁵¹

None of the early versions of the story of Palamedes we possess mentions his lineage, except for references to his father Nauplius and his connection to Poseidon; but by the time of Virgil, Palamedes is directly and explicitly connected genealogically to the family of Belos (and thus Danaus): Sinon refers to Palamedes as *Belides*, a descendant of Belos (Virgil, *Aeneid* 2. 82).⁵² While such an explicit connection is late, one can hardly avoid noticing that the only definite mention of 'written signs' in the *Iliad* is the folded tablet on which King Proetus, also a descendant of Danaus and thus part of Palamedes' family (although there are a number of variants in the genealogical details), scratches *semata lugra*, a writing 'avant la lettre'—or more precisely, a writing produced before a younger member of the same family could (re-?)invent the use of letters. A thread seems to have been running through the family, from Danaus to Proetus to Palamedes—attracting along the way

⁴⁹ Oeax, brother of Palamedes, is mentioned as one of the Argive citizens particularly hostile to Orestes in Eur. *Orestes* 432. If the plot of the Euripidean *Palamedes* (produced before the *Orestes*: the latter's production is dated to 408 BC) contained an attempt at murdering Oeax, as suggested by Luppe 2011 on the basis of P. Mich. inv. 3020(A), Oeax's hostility is even more understandable. For Pausanias 2. 20. 3 the remote antiquity of the temple of Tyche in Argos is proved by the fact that in it Palamedes dedicated the dice (κύβους) that he had just invented. Eustathius (in *Il.* 2. 308, 228.8) says that according to some, Palamedes' own draught (παισσίς) was to be seen in Argos. Kleingünther 1933: 27 rightly takes the Argive origin as self-evident.

⁵⁰ Kleingünther 1933: 28; and 82 for the basic connection between Palamedes and the inventions of numbers, weights and measures, letters, and ranks. Of course, these are contested traditions, and there may have been a Euboean Palamedes, just as there may have been a Euboean Io (see Mitchell 2001); but by the moment when writing (and epistolary writing) enter the story, the Argive tradition has imposed itself, and it constitutes the background for the elaborations on the story of Palamedes.

⁵¹ See Gantz 1993: 203 for the upper part of the line (Io, Belos, Danaus, and Aegyptus); West 1997 442–55.

⁵² On Palamedes in Virgil see Horsfall 2008: 110–18.

also Cadmus.⁵³ Argos thus plays a pivotal role in many of the traditions on the invention or transmission of writing;⁵⁴ the craft figures quite importantly among the prerogatives of the descendants of Inachos. It is probably not by accident that writing is present specifically in the heroic stemma that more than any other was extended to include the Eastern Mediterranean; but within this stemma, Palamedes appears as thoroughly 'Greek'.

The legend of Palamedes is certainly ancient. The hero played a relatively important role in the *Cypria*: he uncovered the feigned madness of Odysseus, and thus forced him to join the expedition against Troy; Odysseus avenged himself, with the help of Diomedes, by causing the hero's death through drowning during a fishing expedition.⁵⁵ A short sentence in Ps-Apollodorus' *Bibliothēke* (2. 1. 5) states that according to the tragic poets Palamedes was the son of Nauplius and Klymene, but that in the *Nostoi* his mother was Philyra, while Kerkops (reputedly author of an *Aegimius*) mentioned as his mother Hesione. This shows that Palamedes, or at any rate his father Nauplius, played a role in the *Nostoi* (fr. 1 Bernabé) and in the Hesiodic *Aegimius* (fr. 297 M.-W.), but also that the traditions concerning the hero were still relatively unstable.⁵⁶

It is unclear how far back in time the tradition reaches that assigns to him the invention of letters: a fleeting reference in the scholia to Dionysius Thrax informs us that Stesichorus in his *Oresteia* (fr. 213 PMG) attributed to Palamedes the invention of *στοιχεῖα* (letters, or possibly numbers); unfortunately, the context in which the discovery was made is not given, nor its purpose. Palamedes can only have been incidentally relevant to the *Oresteia*: he might have been mentioned as the reason of the hatred of Oeax, Palamedes' brother, for Orestes, attested in Euripides' *Orestes* (Eur. *Or.* 432). At any rate, from this the inference has been made that Stesichorus was alluding to a story already known.⁵⁷ Such an inference is most likely correct, but it need not mean much in chronological terms:

⁵³ Although mainly known for his Phoenician origin and his link with the city of Thebes, Cadmus is, in the fifth century, part of the same family as Danaus: the extended narrative of Io's story in Bacchylides' *Dithyramb* 19 leads to Cadmus son of Agenor, and from there to Dionysos. Discussion of Cadmus' genealogy in Edwards 1979: 23–9, 47–8, 165–8; see also Jacoby, *ad FGrH* 1 F 20 and *FGrH* 70 F 105; Hecataeus of Abdera, *FGrH* 264 F 6; Kleingünther 1933: 131. Fascinating discussion of the story of Cadmus, its antiquity, and its meaning in Gruen 2010: 233–9.

⁵⁴ The connection with Euboea dear to Powell should be considered, keeping in mind the possibility of an Euboean Io, argued for by Mitchell 2001. At a late-sixth- to early-fifth-century level, at any rate, our sources are clear on the Argive connection. An Argive presence can be felt even in Herodotus' account: the expulsion of the Cadmeans from Boeotia by the Argives is mentioned at the beginning of the excursus on writing (5. 57. 2) and at its end (61. 2): the Argives somehow cause writing to become 'phoinikeia' (before, the letters are still Cadmean, as on the tripods).

⁵⁵ Resp. Procl. *Chrest. Ep.* 119–21 Severyns = *Cypria arg.* 30 ff. Bernabé; and Procl. *Chrest. Ep.* 166 Severyns = *Cypria arg.* 66 Bernabé, with also Paus. 10. 31, 2 = *Cypr.* fr. 30 Bernabé. For the debate on the antiquity of the story of Palamedes, and in particular on whether Homer intentionally erased Palamedes from his epics, see Usener 1994: 50–6 (who rightly stresses that it is uncertain whether Palamedes' *sophia* was already highlighted in the *Cypria*); Falcetto 2002: 11–12. According to the antiquarian Polemon (F 32 Müller = Eust. in *Il.* 2. 308, 228. 2–4), a stone marked, on the plain of Troy, the place where Palamedes used to play dice and draughts.

⁵⁶ The fifth century marks a turning point. Note that Ps-Apollodorus does not explicitly say that in the *Nostoi* Nauplius was Palamedes' father; the earliest clear statement is in Eur. *IA* 198 (Palamedes son of the son of Poseidon); cf. Jacoby *ad FGrH* 3 F 4.

⁵⁷ Jeffery 1967: 152.

Stesichorus might have recounted the story of Palamedes at greater length in his *Nostoi*, where the vengeance of Nauplius would have been pertinent. In this case, the passage in the *Oresteia* might be interpreted as an allusion to a theme already broached elsewhere by Stesichorus himself, and there would be no need to go much further back in time for the story. The further inference that Hecataeus would have rejected Palamedes' claims to the invention in favour of Danaus is unsupported by any evidence; while Palamedes might, it is true, have been mentioned in an aside, there are no compelling reasons for Hecataeus to have mentioned him.⁵⁸

The next author to mention Palamedes after Stesichorus is Pindar, who in a very fragmentary poem seems to state that Palamedes surpassed Odysseus in *sophia* (fr. 260 S.–M.). The very fragmentary lines may be reconstructed so as to refer to a dispute, possibly even to a hidden *logos* and a fishing net, but it is impossible to know exactly what was going on. The (probable) fishing net might show that we are still here in the tradition of the *Cypria*.

We have thus reached the fifth century. Importantly, it is only from this moment onwards that the tradition is attested according to which the death of the hero was caused by a false letter accusing him of betrayal and planted by Odysseus. This seems to have been a new development, specific to drama. At any rate, a passage of Polyaeus shows conclusively that the tragedians abandoned the older version of the *Cypria*, implying a violent death by drowning, to focus instead on a version implying a false accusation by Odysseus and the ensuing condemnation of Palamedes after a debate in front of the army.⁵⁹ A forged letter need not have been always part of the dramatic plot, but the false accusation and the public debate were: the new version offered to the playwrights the possibility of staging a public debate, and of exploring issues linked to decision-making, trust, and truth.⁶⁰ Thus, in the course of the fifth and the fourth centuries BC a debate concerning the functions and uses of writing developed around the story of Palamedes. This debate started in drama but became central in the sophistic and philosophical milieu, as shown by the *Apology of Palamedes* of Gorgias, possibly by the *Odysseus* attributed to Alcidas, and by a few other scattered references.⁶¹ The relative scarcity of depictions of Palamedes may also be taken to

⁵⁸ Jeffery 1967: 154, Heubeck 1979: 106, and Powell 1991: 5–6 all propose, against Jacoby (*FGrH* 1. 323–4), that Hecataeus in suggesting Danaus as the inventor of writing was implicitly polemicizing against Stesichorus and the poetic tradition, who supported Palamedes. This, if it were true, would of course imply a greater diffusion of the story of Palamedes than the fragments we have would lead us to believe, and also a strong connection, at an early time, of the hero with writing.

⁵⁹ Polyaeus. 1 prooem. 12: οἷον δὲ καὶ κείνο στρατήγημα Ὀδυσσεὺς οἱ τραγωδοὶ ᾄδουσι. Παλαμίδην ἐνίκησεν Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐν δικαστηρίῳ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν ὑποβαλὼν αὐτοῦ τῇ σκηνῇ βαρβαρικὸν χρυσίον, καὶ ὁ σοφώτατος τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐκεῖνος ἦλθε προδοσίας δόλῳ καὶ στρατηγηματι. See Scodel 1980: 43–4 for the difference between the epic and the tragic/rhetorical Palamedes.

⁶⁰ Polyaeus' summary is compressed, but no letter is mentioned, although the gold is. Cf. Engel 2000: 319: 'Crucially, it is not clear whether Palamedes' invention of writing and his being undone by a forged letter were both regular details in the story, or even whether they were features of Sophocles' and Euripides' [or rather Aeschylus?]' plays. The forged note was not *always* part of the story. Gorgias' *Palamedes* points out that no such evidence exists'. *Contra*, e.g. Usener 1994: 56–64, for whom a letter (or even two) was part of all the tragic plots.

⁶¹ O'Sullivan 2008 proposes a much later date for the *Odysseus* attributed to Alcidas (after the first century AD). Independently of the question of date and authenticity, I accept Scodel's (1980: 46–7)

confirm that outside tragedy and oratory the character of Palamedes did not attract much interest: before the fifth century, the hero appears only once, on a Corinthian pyxis of about 570 BC as part of a named group comprising Protesilaus, Nestor, Patroclus, and Achilles riding to the right, while Hector and Memnon ride to the left.⁶² In fifth-century iconography Palamedes appears only twice. An Attic red figure calyx crater dated to c.440 BC depicting a *Nekyia* has Palamedes (inscribed ΤΑΛΑΜΕΔΕΣ) leaning on a column before Persephone and holding an oar (an allusion to the means by which Oeax informed his father Nauplius of the events? or to the older story of his death by drowning, as is commonly assumed?). And in Pausanias' description of Polygnotus' *Nekyia* in the Lesche of the Cnidians at Delphi, a gathering of Odysseus' victims has Palamedes playing dice with Thersites, with Ajax close by.⁶³ In its epistolary version, then, the story of Palamedes begins as a fifth-century Athenian story, closely linked to drama and oratory.⁶⁴

Four *Palamedes* plays are known to have existed, by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Astydamas the younger; they seem to have differed in quite a few aspects. Unluckily, only a few fragments are preserved: two and four, respectively, from Aeschylus' and Sophocles' plays; thirteen from the Euripidean *Palamedes*; none from that of Astydamas. Any reconstruction, therefore, must perforce base itself on the use of divergent accounts in later sources, with all the methodological problems this entails.⁶⁵ Not even the order in which the various *Palamedes* plays were staged is certain: the first one was Aeschylus'; the *Palamedes* of Euripides was

argument that the *Odysseus* does not directly reflect any specific play, and that 'all in his work that is not free invention is no doubt a hodge-podge of bits adapted from various sources which could easily be unconnected with Palamedes'. The arrow bearing a message, for instance, is first found in Herodotus 8. 128, and will have a long life as a stratagem for secret communication across enemy lines.

⁶² Pyxis Louvre E 609, Cf. Woodford 1994a: 147, no. 9, who notes that 'it is unlikely that any specific story is referred to'.

⁶³ Crater New York MMA 08. 258. 21; and Paus. 10. 31. 1–3 (Woodford 1994a: 147, nos. 7 and 8). For the later period, Woodford 1994a lists only four representations, and five more uncertain ones; see also Woodford 1994b for a fuller discussion. Palamedes seems to have enjoyed a much greater success among the Etruscans, with nine named depictions: particularly interesting is an Etruscan bronze mirror of the third century BC, on which the hero (Palmithe) is depicted seated with a *diptychon* in his lap; besides him (E)linai (Helen), Ziumithe (Diomedes), Euturpe, Umaele, and another masculine figure (Krauskopf 1994, 148, no. 16, and 149; Da Puma 2001). See also above, n. 32.

⁶⁴ For the phases in the development of the story see Usener 1994; Gantz 1993: 603–5; Jouan 1966: 339–63. List of sources in Lewy 1897–1902: 1264–73 (to which add Ion of Chios *FGrH* 392 F 2 = Athen. 10. 426 E, in which Palamedes, rather uniquely, figures as a *mantis*). Jouan and van Looy 2000: 503 note that the false accusation is a fairly widespread folkloric motif (they compare the story of Joseph and Benjamin in Genesis 44, and the trick by which the Delphians free themselves from Aesop, schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 1446, Plut. *de sera num.* 12, 556 F, P.Oxy 1800, fr. 2), and feel that it is impossible to date the moment it entered the story of Palamedes; Aeschylus is at any rate the first to have brought it on the scene.

⁶⁵ See the *Notice* in Jouan–Van Looy 2000: 487–513. Proposals of reconstruction of the plots of these dramas: Scodel 1980: 43–63; Müller 1990; Usener 1994: 56–64; Falchetto 2002: 17–21 (for the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles) and 171–95 (for the Euripidean *Palamedes*). None of these authors could use the fragment from the end of the hypothesis of the *Palamedes* published by Luppe (2011). To the versions of the story I shall discuss should be added [Apollod.] *Epit.* 3. 8 (a fairly simple version); Serv. in *Aen.* 2. 81 (close to Hyginus); and those details that can be gleaned from Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes*, from the *Odysseus* attributed to Alcidas, from Philostratus' *Heroicus*, and from the prose paraphrase of Euripides' *Philoctetes* contained in Dion of Prusa's speech 59. 1–11.

part of the trilogy comprising also *Alexander* and *Troades*, the latter usually dated to 415 BC; as for the Sophoclean plays linked to the story (the *Palamedes*, but also the *Nauplius navigans*), they might have preceded, but also followed, the Euripidean one. Thus, what follows next is best taken as an overall picture of the main, common characteristics of the 'tragic Palamedes', although some differences in the plots will be highlighted. We shall then look more specifically at the role of letter writing in Euripides' play.

Our main source for the 'tragic' Palamedes is a scholion to Euripides' *Orestes* (432). According to the scholiast, Palamedes' first intervention in favour of the Achaeans took place during their involuntary stay at Aulis: he solved the difficulties caused by the rationing of food by showing them the use of Phoenician characters, presumably for numbering the rations (πρώτον μὲν τὰ Φοινίκια διδάξας γράμματα αὐτοὺς ἔσθην τε καὶ ἀνεπίληπτον τὴν διανομὴν ἐν τούτοις ἐπραγματεύσατο). Here the idea of a Phoenician origin of writing is combined with a Greek hero, Palamedes, and with distributive numbering. Rather than seeing in this a memory of the 'real' origin of writing and of its initial purpose, I would argue that this is a result of fifth-century and later amalgamation of the various traditions concerning the invention of writing. On the same occasion Palamedes was also said to have invented measures, as well as games of dice and draughts, thereby offering the troops distraction from hunger and inaction (κύβους . . . καὶ μέτρα ἐξέεῦρε καὶ ψήφον). This provoked the jealousy of Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes, however, who decided to destroy him. They forced a Trojan prisoner to write a letter in Phrygian characters as if sent by Priam to Palamedes, revealing the latter as a traitor (ἡνάγκασαν γράψαι Φρυγίους γράμμασι περὶ προδοσίας ὡς παρὰ Πριάμου πρὸς Παλαμήδην). Next, having persuaded a servant of Palamedes to hide the letter and the 'Trojan' gold under Palamedes' bed, they accused the hero of betrayal and ordered a search of his tent. The letter and the gold were found, and the Achaeans stoned Palamedes to death.⁶⁶ The scholion continues with the arrival at Troy of Nauplius, who has heard of the events, and with his request for justice. The army, however, disregards his request, preferring to please their leaders. Nauplius thus leaves for home, but prepares his revenge.⁶⁷

Two small points are worth singling out. If we can trust the wording of the scholion, in this version of the story Palamedes does not really 'invent' writing, but simply transposes Phoenician characters (are these only the words of the

⁶⁶ According to a number of scholars (notably Carl Robert; more recently Jouan 1966: 345, Müller 1990, Usener 1994: 57), the scholion preserves the intrigue of the Euripidean *Palamedes*, because a scholiast to Euripides would most likely have given the Euripidean version, and because of the accumulation of bad characters—Agamemnon, Diomedes, Odysseus—all united to destroy the hero, something that is typical of the late Euripides (and more specifically of *Troades*, which was part of this trilogy). Scodel 1980: 50–2 objects that this intrigue allows only one *agon*, since the letter and the gold are discovered at the same time; she thus prefers to see here the intrigue of the Aeschylean homonymous tragedy.

⁶⁷ This last part—in particular the arrival of Nauplius at Troy—coincides with what we learn from the fragmentary final part of the hypothesis of the Euripidean *Palamedes* recently published by Luppe (2011). However, if Luppe's reconstruction is correct, in the Euripidean play there was also an attempt at killing Oeax by drowning: of this no mention is made in the scholion, nor of the message sent by Oeax (Nauplius arrives 'having heard', *Ναύπλιος δὲ ἀκούσας ἤκειν*). See below.

scholiast? or, if the term *phoinikia* to describe the letters was present in the source, why were they called so—was there a link to his Phoenician lineage in the source that the scholiast is following?). Moreover, the purpose of his invention is clearly stated, namely to help with the rationing and distribution of food. However, Palamedes' ruin is caused by a letter, one written in Phrygian characters: writing seems in the plot described to be conceived as already having a wide—and fairly differentiated—currency. Not only that. While there seems to be no sense of a difference in language (the Greeks do not need, at least in the compressed version of the scholion, an interpreter to convey their message to the Trojan prisoner), writing is coded in a variety of ways: pre-existing Phoenician characters are adapted by Palamedes to the necessities of the Greeks and Phrygian characters are used by the Trojans. This has the further implication that Palamedes is convicted by a piece of evidence that the Greeks cannot decipher, for otherwise they would not have needed a Trojan prisoner to write it. We possibly see here the trace of a reflection on the ability of signs to work on their own, beyond their meaning. This is a prominent feature of a number of 'tragic' letters, Euripidean in particular.⁶⁸

Hyginus' *fabula* 105 preserves a slightly different version. Odysseus, determined to ruin Palamedes, convinces Agamemnon of the necessity to move the camp for one day, and then during the night hides gold where the tent of Palamedes had been. He then gives a letter for Priam (presumably written by himself: the foreign aspect of the writing is not stressed in this account) to a Phrygian slave, whom he despatches to Priam, having previously arranged for him to be killed while on his journey. On the following day, when the army comes back to the camp, the body is found, and with it the letter. It turns out that it contains a message sent by Priam to Palamedes, promising him as much gold as Odysseus has hidden in the tent if he will betray the Greeks according to the proposed agreement. An *agon* followed in which Palamedes defended himself; to prove his innocence, he asked for his tent to be inspected, but at this point the gold was found and Palamedes put to death.⁶⁹

Servius offers in his commentary to the *Aeneid* (2. 81) a fairly similar version, but adds some novel elements, one of which is a genealogy: Palamedes descended at a remove of seven generations from Belus (Servius is here discussing the expression used by Virgil in *Aen.* 2. 82, *Belidae Palamedis*). It is impossible to know when exactly the genealogical connection between Belus and Palamedes was established (it is explicitly stated only in Virgil), but it might go back all the way to the fifth century BC—after all, as we saw, Apollonius Rhodius provides a genealogy connecting Danaus and Palamedes, and the link between Danaus and Belus is a relatively early one. Another interesting aspect of Servius' version, one that may with some likelihood go back to the Sophoclean play, is that Odysseus is portrayed as particularly devious: he is the one who, when presenting himself as a supporter

⁶⁸ See below, 224–30, for a discussion of the function (and functioning) of Iphigenia's letter in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. This Euripidean element should be taken into account in the discussion of whether the scholion reflects the Euripidean or the Aeschylean *Palamedes*.

⁶⁹ According to Scodel 1980: 47–54, this *fabula* represents the main lines of the Euripidean version. Usener 1994: 62 imagines a 'Verdoppelung', a duplication of the letter motif, in what he identifies as the Sophoclean play, which is not borne out by the texts.

of Palamedes after the letter has been found, suggests that in order to clear the hero of any remaining suspicion his tent should be searched.⁷⁰

While it is possible to notice differences in emphasis and while the range and scope of Palamedes' inventions show some variations, the plots make clear both Palamedes' standing as an inventor and the role played in his demise by a false accusation, in most cases supported by a letter. Although already in the *Cypria* Palamedes had shown his *sophia* by unmasking Odysseus' stratagem, the first explicit mention of inventions in connection with him had been in Stesichorus' *Oresteia*. But as an inventor, Palamedes 'takes off', together with a few other figures, in the fifth century. Each of the *Palamedes* plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides included a list of his inventions, pronounced by the hero or by someone else in his defence; a list of discoveries was also in the Sophoclean *Nauplius katapleon* (or *pyrkaieus*), relating the story of the vengeance of Palamedes' father. That all these lists have been preserved, even if only in short quotes, shows the interest of later authors for this aspect of the story. It is worth looking at them in more detail, both for the indications they give of the different aspects of the hero's character stressed by the three tragedians, and because they offer the possibility of contextualizing Palamedes' invention of writing among his other discoveries.⁷¹

Writing is not mentioned as one of Palamedes' discoveries in the preserved fragments of Aeschylus' homonymous play. In fr. 181a Radt, probably from the defence speech of Palamedes, the hero asserted, in terms very close to those used by Prometheus in the *Prometheus vincitus*, that 'I organized the life of the Greeks and their allies (πάσης Ἑλλάδος καὶ ξυμμάχων), which previously had been as chaotic as that of beasts. To begin with, I invented the ingenious art of number, supreme among all techniques'.⁷² The invention of numbers implies that of the letters, since, with the partial exception of Attica, where the acrophonic system was used, numbers were expressed through the ordered sequel of the alphabetic letters. It is thus possible that writing might have been mentioned later in the speech, as is the case with the *Prometheus*; but it is impossible to know what aspects of the craft would have been stressed. In fr. 182 Radt, from the same speech, further specific inventions are recounted: 'and I appointed brigade (ταξιάρχους) and company commanders (ἐκατοντάρχους) for the army, and I taught them to distinguish their meals, to take breakfast, dinner, and thirdly supper'. The speech was certainly much longer, and there is no guessing what else could have been mentioned. The focus on military aspects and on distributive

⁷⁰ See e.g. Müller 1990: 204–6 and Falcetto 2002: 20, who base this interpretation on Sophocles fr. 479 Radt, a praise of Palamedes pronounced by someone else: a lying Odysseus, rather than Palamedes' father Nauplius (the other possibility).

⁷¹ A point stressed by Detienne 1989: 105–8. Kurke (1999: 248–53) understands Palamedes' inventions as symbolic systems intimately connected with the civic, democratic order. Yet in the context of the story of Palamedes, I would sympathize with Steiner's (1994) approach: writing seems to be perceived as a craft potentially dangerous for the democratic city. See also Vasunia 2001: 149 and n. 29.

⁷² The fragment is quoted by Stobaeus directly after the similar tirade of the *Prometheus vincitus* (see discussion above). Here and elsewhere for Aeschylus' *Palamedes* I follow Sommerstein's (2008) Loeb translation. The numbering of the fragments is the same in both editions with the exception of fr. 451k *incertae sedis* Radt, considered by Sommerstein (2000 and 2009) to be from the prologue of the *Palamedes* and thus assigned by him the number 180a.

organization is at any rate evident: these two fragments are very close to the summary offered by the scholion to Euripides' *Orestes*.

In Sophocles' *Palamedes* the hero's discoveries were recounted by someone else, either Nauplius, or, as seems more likely, Odysseus being duplicitous. The main theme of the single extant fragment is the resolution of the famine, probably in conjunction with food rationing and with the invention of various pastimes (inventing pastimes is often connected with surviving famines):⁷³

'Was it not he who drove famine away from them, be it said with reverence towards the god, and he who discovered the cleverest ways of passing time for them when they were resting after their struggle with the waves, draughts and dice, a pleasant remedy against idleness?' (fr. 479 Radt, trans. Lloyd-Jones)

In the same way Sophocles in the *Nauplius navigans* had another person, this time Palamedes' father, enumerate the benefits brought to the Greeks by his son:

'And it was he who devised the wall for the army of the Argives; his was the invention of weights, numbers and measures; he taught them to marshal armies thus and how to know the heavenly signs (οὐράνιά τε σήματα). He was the first, too, who showed how to count from one to ten and so to fifty and to a thousand; he showed the army how to use beacons (στρατοῦ φρυκτωρίαν), and revealed things that earlier were hidden. He discovered how to measure terms and periods of the stars, trustworthy signs (πιστὰ σημαντήρια) for those who watched while others slept, and for the shepherds of ships at sea he found out the turnings of the Bear and the chilly setting of the Dogstar.'

(Soph. fr. 432 Radt, trans. Lloyd-Jones)

In this long series of eleven iambic lines, the army and practical wisdom are very much on the forefront, possibly simply because of the location of the action (the Achaean encampment at Troy); yet, what is stressed throughout is Palamedes' ability at interpreting signs, and at rearranging them in a meaningful way.⁷⁴ Another fragment, probably from this same part of the *Nauplius navigans*, picks up on aspects that had been highlighted in the fragment from the Sophoclean *Palamedes*: the hero invented 'the draughts-boards with five lines (πενσὰ πεντέγραμμοι) and the throwing of the dice' (fr. 429 Radt). The discovery of writing is potentially implied in this last fragment; however, nothing of what remains of Aeschylus or Sophocles allows us to know how the invention was presented or what aspects of it were stressed.⁷⁵

⁷³ Herodotus 1. 94, the story of how the Lydians who then colonized the Tyrrhenian coast survived a famine lasting eighteen years by playing every other day, offers a good parallel—interestingly Herodotus, while not mentioning alternative versions, stresses that it is the Lydians who pretend to have invented the games of dice and knuckle-bones and ball, and all other games but draughts, Hdt. 1. 94. 3. Cf. the disapproval in Athen. 1. 19 A; and Kurke 1999: 248–54.

⁷⁴ An aspect highlighted by Jenkins 2006: 19–20; see already Purcell 1995. One may compare with Herodotus' insistence on the necessity of rearranging the sequences of letters (their *rhythmos*) in order for the Phoenician signs to function in Greece: cf. Calame 1993. The grouping of weights, numbers, and measures acquires importance only in the second half of the fifth century, reflecting the striving towards *ἀκριβεία*, precision, typical of the moment: Heinimann 1975.

⁷⁵ In fact, only the discovery of numbers was certainly present in all tragedies: cf. Plato's amused comment (*Resp.* 522d) that in all tragedies Palamedes makes Agamemnon appear ridiculous, a leader unable to count his soldiers—indeed, unable to count his feet. Bertrand 1999: 64–6 emphasizes the connection between writing and war (for which see also below, on Gorgias' *Palamedes*), and hence the political meaning of writing; but he does not mention Palamedes.

It is only with a fragment from Euripides' *Palamedes* that we gain an insight into the value and the function attributed by Palamedes/(Euripides) to his invention. In this passage, Palamedes is speaking, almost certainly in the context of the *agon* in which he defended himself against Odysseus:

τὰ τῆς γε λήθης φάρμακ' ὀρθώσας μόνος,
ἄφωνα καὶ φωνοῦντα, συλλαβὰς τιθεῖς,
ἐξηῦρον ἀνθρώποισι γράμματα' εἰδέναι,
ὥστ' οὐ παρόντα ποντίας ὑπὲρ πλακὸς
τὰ κεῖ κατ' οἴκους πάντ' ἐπίστασθαι καλῶς,
παισὶν τ' ἀποθνήσκοντα χρημάτων μέτρον
γράφαντα λείπειν, τὸν λαβόντα δ' εἰδέναι.
ἀ δ' εἰς ἔριν πίπτουσιν ἀνθρώποις κακὰ
δέλτος διαιρεῖ, κοῦκ ἐὰ ψευδῇ λέγειν. (Eur. fr. 578 Kannicht)

'Alone, I set up remedies against forgetfulness, without speech and yet speaking, by creating syllables;⁷⁶ I invented for mankind knowledge of the letters. Thus, one who is away on the other side of the marine expanse knows perfectly well what is going on there, at home, and when he dies he leaves for his children the measure of his fortune, having recorded it,⁷⁷ and the recipient knows it. The evils that afflict men when they enter into quarrels a writing-tablet solves, and it doesn't allow the telling of lies.'

Here, writing has lost its connection with rationing and organization; the primary functions of the discovery now are the preservation of information (memory) and the enabling of long-distance communication.⁷⁸ The hero appears fully convinced of the merits of his discovery; the examples of possible uses of writing that follow illustrate the potentialities of the new medium. However, in the

⁷⁶ The language is possibly technical, at any rate difficult. Various translations of this line have been proposed: I have kept close to that suggested by Collard and Cropp 2008, who, however, also entertain in a footnote the alternative possibilities of 'consonants and vowels, by creating syllables' and 'by creating consonants and vowels and syllables'. Scodel 1980: 91 accepts the correction *φωνήεντα* and takes *ἄφωνα φωνήεντα* to have here their later well-attested meaning of 'surds and sonants'; Jouan and van Looy 2000 also accept *φωνήεντα* and translate as an asyndeton, 'by creating consonants, vowels and syllables' (a variant is 'by organizing consonants and vowels into syllables', as Jenkins 2006: 20).

⁷⁷ There are here two textual issues that impact importantly on the meaning. The first one concerns l. 6: τ' ἀποθνήσκοντα is the transmitted text, accepted by Kannicht. It can be understood as referring to the person who is away, and then dies; but, as Kannicht says, this form is unparalleled in tragedy. Thus, Neri 1997: 168 prints the words between cruces; Jouan and van Looy 2000 and Collard and Cropp 2008 accept Wecklein's τε τὸν θνήσκοντα, 'and if someone dies' (so also Jenkins 2006: 20), which is also problematic; see Neri 2007: 169 for full discussion and list of other proposals. With the transmitted text, distance is the reason for writing the will; with Wecklein's emendation, the reason becomes the possibility of checking it. The second issue concerns l. 7, where both Kannicht and Collard and Cropp 2008 print Scaliger's emendation γράψαντα λείπειν. Stobaeus, who preserves the passage, has here γράψαντας εἰπεῖν; while the accusative plural in the transmitted text is problematic, the connection between writing and speaking is tempting. Neri 2007: 168 thus accepts Boissonade's γράψαντα γ' εἰπεῖν, while Jouan and Van Looy print Gomperz's γράψαντ' ἐνισπεῖν, 'tells, having recorded it'. See Neri 2007 for a full apparatus and list of *loci similes*.

⁷⁸ For Turner 1975: 17 the purpose is memory only, as in Aeschylus and possibly Stesichorus. Turner accepts, as everyone, that the second example of writing refers to the possibility of leaving a testament; but in the first he sees an allusion to the Ionian *historia*, to documents such as the map of Anaximander, the works of Hecataeus, and those of Herodotus later. I find this difficult to accept in light of the κατ' οἴκους, 'at home'; moreover, it is hard to see what sense a reference to Ionian *historia* would make in the context of the play.

context of the play, these words of Palamedes are charged with heavy irony.⁷⁹ A letter—a forged letter, feigning private communication between a Trojan and a Greek, but in reality publicizing to the army the false accusation of a Greek against another Greek—will cause the death of the hero. As for the advantages of writing to dispose of one's fortune, it is true that occasionally sources mention the usefulness of writing in legal contexts, and especially to write down laws or wills.⁸⁰ However, a written testament, that is, a securely guarded text, was looked at with mistrust in Athens even in the fourth century BC: thus goes yet another of the advantages mentioned by Palamedes.⁸¹ Finally, as the protagonist realizes in the course of the action, no tablet in itself can pretend to the truth.⁸² In fact, the very last sentence of the fragment, on the possibility of solving disputes through the use of tablets that do not allow falsehoods, announces the next moment in the action: the discovery of the tablet accusing Palamedes of betrayal.

But if this final sentence on the truthfulness of tablets is so evidently related to what follows, one may justifiably wonder whether the allusion to the usefulness of writing for long-distance communication, far from being a traditional motif, does not also owe its presence here to dramatic strategy: it anticipates an action that takes place later in the drama, when Oeax, Palamedes' brother, tries to send a message to their father Nauplius.⁸³ For Euripides' play had a further epistolary twist, which must have been important enough to be parodied in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (vv. 768–84 = Eur. fr. 588a Kannicht). At this point in the play, Euripides' kinsman, having been unmasked as a woman, has already tried to help himself out of his plight by using stratagems, scenes, and props taken from a famous Euripidean play, the *Telephus*, but has failed in his endeavours. He now wants to inform Euripides of the situation, and thus looks for a messenger, but cannot find one; remembering the method used in Euripides' own *Palamedes*, he decides to inscribe oar blades and throw them in the sea. As he cannot find any oars, the kinsman settles for votive tablets, which he then proceeds to throw in all directions, happily noting that 'they're wooden too, just like oar blades' (775). The

⁷⁹ Irony: Scodel 1980: 116, who demonstrates that this ironic reversal permeated the entire trilogy—and possibly the satyr drama as well (Scodel 1980: 122–37).

⁸⁰ See e.g. Aesch. *Eum.* 273, on the written accounts of Hades. If laws and wills need to be written, it is so that they may be remembered with precision and checked if necessary; this notion can thus be subsumed under the more general idea of writing as a means of, and prompt for, memory (cf. Hedrick 1994).

⁸¹ Maffi 1988: 188–210, and esp. 203. See also below, 269–72, 292; and compare Ar. *Vesp.* 583–7: Philocleon stresses, among the advantages that sitting in the juries gives him, the power deriving from the fact that 'if a father dying gives his heiress daughter to someone, we tell his will, and the shell so solemnly placed over the seal, to go hang its head, and we give that girl to whoever talks us into it. And for doing this we can't be called to account' (κἂν ἀποθνήσκων ὁ πατήρ τῷ δῶ καταλείπων παῖδ' ἐπίκληρον, | κλάειν ἡμεῖς μακρὰ τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰπόντες τῇ διαθήκῃ | καὶ τῇ κόγχῃ τῇ πάνν σεμνῶς τοῖς σημείοισιν ἐπούση, | ἔδομεν ταύτην ὅστις ἂν ἡμᾶς ἀντιβολήσας ἀναπέισθ. | καὶ ταῦτ' ἀννπεύθυννοι δρώμεν). Philocleon here clearly thinks of a written will—a powerless will, however.

⁸² Jenkins' (2006: 21) stress on the innovation implied in Odysseus' invention of forgery is excessive: the process of communication may be manipulated on the oral level as well, as the stratagems of Themistocles and Leotychidas (Hdt. 8. 221. 2 and 9. 98. 3–4, discussed below, 116–18) show. Yet there is in the play something that reminds one of the emphasis put by Thucydides on Nicias' decision of sending a letter (Thuc. 7. 8. 2, discussed below, 142–6).

⁸³ Already noted by Jouan 1966: 351 n. 1. On this episode's organization see Scodel 1980: 58–9.

scholia to these verses (schol. Ar. *Thesm* 770a and 770b) explain that Euripides in his *Palamedes* had Oeax inscribe the story on oar blades that he then abandoned to the sea so that at least one might reach Nauplius; the oars, floating over the Aegean, were meant to reach Greece and to transmit the information.

Interestingly, the votive tablets of the kinsman do not produce an immediate effect; it is only when the kinsman turns to yet another Euripidean tragedy and resorts to playing Helen that Euripides/Menelaus arrives. A recently published papyrus fragment preserving the end of the hypothesis of the Euripidean *Palamedes* seems to imply that in the *Palamedes* too, Nauplius may have arrived in Troy independently of the message—or at any rate that he received it when already under way, so that the message sent by Oeax would have been of limited usefulness. More precisely, the fragment of the hypothesis begins with the recovery by Nauplius of one son, thrown into the sea and saved from drowning by the Nereids: possibly it was Oeax himself that informed his father, and not the tablets at all.⁸⁴

A connection between the stress on writing as a means of communication at a distance, in the words pronounced by Palamedes in the *agon*, and Oeax's stratagem is rendered likely by the fact that none of the mythographical sources mentions either Oeax, who is a rather obscure character anyway, or the 'bottle-in-the-sea' stratagem.⁸⁵ Surely if some such story had been present also in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' versions the scholia would have mentioned it. Interestingly, Libanius (*De Socrati silentio*, 28) eliminates Oeax and presents a Palamedes himself writing the narrative of the events on the very ships of the Achaeans (presumably just before being stoned).⁸⁶ The passage of the *Thesmophoriazusae* too may be taken to imply the relative obscurity of the character Oeax, for there the kinsman says that he will imitate the *Palamedes*, and 'like that fellow' (ὥς ἐκεῖνος, 775) inscribe oars: Oeax is not explicitly mentioned. Yet the scholia to the passage make it abundantly clear that in Euripides' *Palamedes* it was Oeax who inscribed the story:

ὁ γὰρ Εὐριπίδης ἐν τῷ Παλαμῆδει ἐποίησε τὸν Οἶακα τὸν ἀδελφὸν Παλαμήδους ἐπιγράμμαι εἰς τὰς πλάτας⁸⁷ τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ, ἵνα φερόμεναι ἑαυταῖς ἔλθωσιν εἰς

⁸⁴ P.Mich. inv. 3020(a) ll. 1–5, with Luppe's (2011) proposed restorations, runs as follow: ἀπ/ or κατεπον- | | τῷθι τοῦτον [δ] ἐ ἀνησθημῆ- | νον ὑπὸ τῶν Νερείδων ὁ πα- | [τ]ήρ ἀνακομισάμενος Ναύπλι- | 4 [ος] ἀπειλήσας Ἀγαμέμνον[ι] πά- | [λι]ν ἐξέπλευσεν; see the comments of Luppe 2011: 54–5.

⁸⁵ See Müller 1992. Oeax is mentioned, with Nausimedon and Palamedes, as son of Nauplius in [Apollod.] *Bibl.* 2 (23) 1. 5. 14; as the only brother of Palamedes in [Apollod.] *Bibl.* 3 (15) 2. 2. 1 and in schol. Eur. Or. 432; Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 F 4) mentioned a son Damastor. Out of desire for revenge, Oeax came to help Aegisthus and Clytaemestra (according to Hyg. *Fab.* 117, he excited Clytaemestra's anger by reporting that Agamemnon had taken Cassandra as his wife); on a painting, possibly by Polygnotus (in which case dated to the second quarter of the fifth century bc), seen by Pausanias (1. 22. 6) near the Propylaea in Athens, Orestes was depicted killing Aegisthus, while Pylades killed the sons of Nauplius. In Pacuvius' *Doulorestes* (vv. 113–15, 136, 137–8 Ribbeck³ = fr. 88, 89, 90, and 105 Schierl 2006) Oeax was promised to a daughter of Clytaemestra: probably Erigone, daughter of Aegisthus, rather than Electra. Detailed discussion in Schierl 2006: 240–79, and esp. 243–4 for Oeax.

⁸⁶ Liban. *Decl.* 2. 28: ἔδοξέ ποτε καὶ Παλαμῆδην τὸν σοφώτατον τῶν τότε Ἑλλήνων παρὰ δίκην ἀποθανεῖν, ἥσαν γὰρ κὰν Ἰλίῳ τινὲς Ἄντροι καὶ Μέλῃτοι, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνος πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου σιωπᾶν ἐκελεύετο, ἀλλ' ἐξῆν αὐτῷ καὶ λέγειν καὶ γράφειν, καὶ γράψας ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου τοῦ ναυτικοῦ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τύχην ἔπεμψε πῶ ἑαυτοῦ πατρὶ Ναυπλίῳ τὴν ἐπιθανάτιον ἐπιστολήν.

⁸⁷ Here the Ravennas 429 has ναῦς; πλάτας is a correction of Enger accepted by Holwerda, probably because of schol. Ar. *Thesm.* 770ba (quoted in the next note). In view of Libanius' text, maybe the transmitted 'ships' should be maintained.

τὸν Ναύπλιον τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπαγγέλλωσι τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ.

(Schol. Ar. *Thesm.* 770a Holwerda)

for Euripides in the *Palamedes* had Oeax the brother of Palamedes inscribe on the oar blades his death, so that being carried on their own they would arrive to Nauplius his father and announce his death.⁸⁸

In this case the scholia should be trusted: because Aristophanes does not mention the name of Oeax anywhere (of course his point is a comparison between the kinsman and the wise Palamedes), the commentators must have known the story from somewhere else—from Euripides' play or a summary of it.⁸⁹ Libanius' attribution to Palamedes of the writing on the oars may be explained on the assumption that the hero instructed his brother, but even better with the obscurity of the figure of Oeax, and with Libanius' specific interest in Palamedes.⁹⁰ At any rate, the pointed references to Euripides in the Aristophanic parody, better understandable if the stratagem is considered untraditional, an invention of the 'frigid' Euripides,⁹¹ the obscurity of Oeax (whose name, 'Helm', besides being appropriate to the family's connections with Poseidon, may have also been a function of the story, as he steers information, through oars, and through his recovery); and the absence of any references to the staging of a similar stratagem by the earlier tragedians all speak for the non-traditional character of the story.⁹²

⁸⁸ Cf. the fairly similar schol. Ar. *Thesm.* 770ba Holwerda: ὥσπερ Οἷαξ τῷ Ναυπλίῳ γράφει ἐν τῷ Παλαμίδει Εὐριπίδου. ὁ γὰρ Οἷαξ ἐγχαράττει πολλαῖς πλάταις τὰ περὶ τὸν Παλαμίδην καὶ ἀφίησιν εἰς θάλασσαν, ὥστε μὴ γέ τινι τὸν Ναύπλιον προσπεσεῖν.

⁸⁹ See on this issue Scodel 1980: 58–9.

⁹⁰ Libanius' passage shows why the character of Palamedes acquired so much importance: a rich tradition, starting early in the fourth century BC, puts together the unjust trial of Palamedes and that of Socrates, with Palamedes becoming the archetypal figure of the just who is unjustly accused. See Kannicht *ad fr.* 588 for references; Usener 1994: 65–72, who stresses the 'politicization' of Palamedes. The earliest connection between Socrates and Palamedes is put in the mouth of Socrates himself, in Xen. *Apol. Socr.* 26. Diog. Laert. 2. 44, who quotes the fragment 'You have killed, have killed, the all-wise innocent nightingale of the Muses', states that Euripides had Socrates in mind (but then adds a quote from Philochorus affirming that Euripides died before Socrates, as indeed is the case). In this sense, the rapprochement between Palamedes and Prodicus (rather than Socrates) proposed by Worman 2002: 183–4, in her illuminating study of the uses of the characters of Odysseus and Palamedes in the last third of the fifth century and first quarter of the fourth, cannot be taken as central. Of course the story of Palamedes could be used to think about any situation in which an 'intellectual' was unjustly accused: thus also the name of Protagoras, who may have been tried for impiety in Athens in the 420s (Diog. Laert. 9. 54), has been suggested. The paradox of the inventor who suffers from the beneficiaries of his invention is fully brought out e.g. by Dio Chrys. *Or.* 13. 21.

⁹¹ The *Palamedes* as 'frigid' (ψυχρόν): Ar. *Thesm.* 848. The song in Ar. *Thesm.* 768–84 ('Hands of mine, you must put your hand to an effective job. Tablets of planed board (πινάκων ξεστών δελτοι), accept the knife's scratching, harbingers of my troubles (κήρυκας ἐμῶν μόχθων)! Damn, this R is troublesome. There we go, there we go! What a scratch! Be off then, travel every road, this way, that way, and better hurry!', in Henderson's Loeb translation) probably reflects very closely Euripides' highly emotional anapaests: see Kannicht *ad fr.* 588a, Jouan and van Looy (2000) fr. 9, Collard and Cropp 2008 *ad fr.* 588a. and below, 261–2. Incidentally, the absence of Oeax from the scholion to the *Orestes* and from Hyginus *fabula* 105 shows how perilous it is to make either of those summaries the basis of a reconstruction of this play.

⁹² The new fragment of hypothesis P.Mich. inv. 3020(a), showing that—if one follows Luppe's 2011 restorations and interpretation—the Achaeans attempted to kill Oeax by drowning might have been a Euripidean stratagem to combine the new death through stoning, which resulted from the 'epistolary twist' of the plot, with the traditional notion of a death by drowning, as in the fragment of the *Kypria*.

Moreover, it is worth noting that at the level of the plot, Oeax's use of communication in Euripides' *Palamedes* neatly dovetails with what had happened to Palamedes earlier in the same play. As pointed out by Jenkins, the latter is undone by a letter having the wrong sender and addressee (purportedly Priam and Palamedes; actually, Odysseus and the Greek army), thus a letter that does not have a straight path. The former is unable to send his message directly to the intended recipient, but somehow arranges things so that at least one of the many inscribed oars is steered towards the addressee, Nauplius.⁹³ This statement might, however, have to be revised in light of the fragmentary hypothesis preserved in P.Mich. inv. 3020(a): it is possible that Oeax's messages too went to the wrong addressees, since at some point the Achaeans attempted to drown Oeax, and they must have had some reason for this; moreover, if the latter was saved by the Nereids and recovered by the father, it is possible that the father eventually got his information through face-to-face conversation. At any rate, if all this is correct, the connection between the invention of writing by Palamedes (a fairly traditional element, but mainly connected with the rationing of food) and long-distance epistolary communication, whether successful or not, would have been a feature specific to Euripides' play.⁹⁴

From this moment onwards, communication at a distance, whether involving writing or not, will loom large in the stories about Palamedes. An instance very close in time to Euripides' play is the *Palamedes* of Gorgias.⁹⁵ In this speech, the hero argued his defence point by point, discussing opportunity, associates and motive, and character. Palamedes opened his discussion of opportunity by stressing that for him to have agreed with Priam to betray the Greeks, there should have been a *logos*, a speech, and a meeting (*συνουσία*)—but how could this have happened if there were no messengers nor tablets (*οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀγγελία διὰ γραμματείων ἀφίκεται ἄνευ τοῦ φέροντος*, 6)? Even admitting this, how could the exchange have worked when they were speaking different languages (7)?⁹⁶ The explicit denial of the existence of a written message can be interpreted in two ways: in a straightforward way, as implying that the story of the letter did not yet exist (it is then possible to assume that this gave Euripides the idea of the forged letter); or also, as Gorgias' playing with a (recent) version of the story, whose knowledge he assumes in the public, in which case Euripides' play would have preceded Gorgias' *Palamedes*. A choice between these possibilities, on the basis of the evidence we have, is not possible.

⁹³ Jenkins 2006: 23–4.

⁹⁴ Pace Detienne 1989.

⁹⁵ The exact relationship between the play and the speech is uncertain. Scodel 1980: 90 is 'convinced that Euripides used the *Palamedes* of Gorgias as a source' for the *agon*; but she also stresses (91) that there was no letter in Gorgias, for if there had been a letter, the arguments brought forward at Gorg. *Pal.* 6–8 and 22–4, would not make sense. Jenkins 2006: 28 n. 25 is less sure. Usener 1994: 65–9 stresses the difference of Gorgias' project. An excellent overall reading of the speech, in terms of the possibility of the *logos* to communicate, and in particular, to communicate something which is not, in Morgan 2000: 119–22.

⁹⁶ Good discussion in Jenkins 2006: 26–9 (although I disagree with the translation he proposes of the list of inventions; see rather the excellent ones by Untersteiner 1967 and Buchheim 1989, who seem to me to have caught the ambiguity of the words used here). Tablets and languages: see above 77–8.

After the problem of how communication might have been set up, the statement ‘Still, assume that what did not happen has happened’ (11) led to the discussion of further points (associates and motive), and then of character (of the accuser and of Palamedes himself). In this context, a list of inventions was given: the hero substantiated his claim concerning character by stating that he had been the greatest benefactor (μέγας εὐεργέτης) of his audience, of all Greeks, and of all mankind, those living and those to come:

τίς γὰρ ἂν ἐποίησε τὸν ἀνθρώπειον βίον πόριμον ἐξ ἀπόρου καὶ κεκοσμημένον ἐξ ἀκόσμου, τάξεις τε πολεμικὰς εὐρὺν μέγιστον εἰς πλεονεκτήματα, νόμους τε γραπτὸς φύλακας [τε] τοῦ δικαίου, γράμματά τε μνήμης ὄργανον, μέτρα τε καὶ σταθμὰ συναλλαγῶν εὐπόρους διαλλαγὰς, ἀριθμὸν τε χρημάτων φύλακα, πυρσούς τε κρατίστους καὶ ταχίστους ἀγγέλους, πεσσοὺς τε σχολῆς ἄλυπον διατριβήν; (Gorg. Pal. 30)

‘For who else has made human life practicable from impracticable⁹⁷ and organized from disorganized, inventing military structures of the greatest advantage for aggressive expeditions, and written laws, guardians of justice, and letters, a tool of memory, and measures and weights, easy standards of commercial exchanges, and number as guardian of riches, and beacons as very powerful and swift messengers, and draughts, the harmless game of leisure?’

This passage concentrates in one long list most of the inventions that are attributed to Palamedes in fifth-century tragedy; here too, while Palamedes, both in introducing the list and in then capitalizing on it, saw the inventions as indisputable progress, the words with which the inventions themselves are described leave room for anxiety. Palamedes claims to have invented two instruments central to the *politike technē*, divisions of the army (war) and written laws (peace); but his military reforms are meant to allow *pleonektēmata*, a term whose meaning ranges from ‘gain, acquisition’ (in the best of cases) to ‘undue gain, act of overreaching, arrogance, greed’; as for the writing of the law, it allows for consistency, but not necessarily for justice;⁹⁸ the use of the term *phylax*, ‘guardian’, for both the activity of the laws (to guard justice) and the activity of the number (to guard riches) points to an inherent imbalance (why guard riches, in an equal system—Palamedes could have chosen among quite a few other possibilities to illustrate the advantages of numbers). These are extremely slight hints, probably meant to show that even when trying to point out the most positive aspects of inventions, it is impossible to avoid that the language one is using may convey some blame. Interestingly, however, in a speech centred on the issue of the ability of the *logos* to communicate, there is no mention of communication through writing among the inventions. Writing appears, but as an instrument having as its main function the preservation of memories, while the conveyance of long-distance information is limited to the invention of beacons, a traditional element of the story. As for the ability of the *logos* to communicate, the speech itself and the outcome of the story show that Gorgias took a very dim view of it.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *πόριμος* expresses at the same time the notion of a path, and that of finding one’s way through it; with the help of resources (hence the meaning ‘resourceful’ for a person who is *porimos*) one can pass.

⁹⁸ The Euripidean Hecuba could have explained this to him (Eur. *Hec.* 864–7); see discussion below, 210–11.

⁹⁹ Morgan 2000: 121. The final appeal of Palamedes (35) reminds one closely of the wish uttered by all of the main characters of Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, that the truth of deeds could be made clear through

Let us now consider the inventions of Palamedes as a whole. Remarkably, those that systematically turn bad in his story by showing an extraordinary liability to distortions are linked to communication (in the case of Gorgias' *Palamedes*, the failure is radically extended to all communication).¹⁰⁰ Such is the case with letter writing; such is also the case with the use of luminous signals as a code to transmit messages through the night, whose invention is also in some versions attributed to Palamedes. This second invention, meant to benefit humanity, was used by the Greeks to destroy Troy: a fire lit by Sinon gave to the Greeks hiding in Tenedus the signal that the Trojan horse was inside the citadel ([Apollod.] *Epit.* 5. 19). The invention will be even more forcefully distorted by Palamedes' father, Nauplius: already the *Nostoi* recounted how, to avenge the death of his son, Nauplius had corrupted the wives of the heroes during their absence at Troy, and then, at the end of the war, had lit fires that signified death for the Greeks coming back from Troy, by bringing them to shipwreck on the rocks of Euboea.

These same luminous beacons had already been productively used in Attic drama to explore the ambiguities of meaning through the fire signals at the opening of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, set up by a woman (Aesch. *Ag.* 312–13), but a woman defined as *ἀνδρόβουλον*, 'of male counsel' (*Ag.* 11). These fire signals represent an Aeschylean innovation: there is no trace of a beacon chain in earlier versions of the story. Clytaemestra's two speeches (281–316 and 320–50) make it clear how the transmission of the message on the one hand, and its meaning (i.e. its interpretation) on the other, are two different, separate things.¹⁰¹ Signs and meanings do not necessarily hang together. But the beacon scene, in this context an innovation, might have triggered in the spectators of the play a recollection of the story according to which Nauplius had, through beacons, provoked the destruction of the Greek fleet. Slightly later in the *Agamemnon*, a messenger will describe the destruction of the Greek fleet during a hurricane, stating that 'fire and water, two elements resolutely opposed before, conjured together' for the destruction of the Greeks (*Ag.* 650–1: *ξυνώμοσαν γάρ, ὅντες ἔχθιστοι τὸ πρὶν, πῦρ καὶ θάλασσα*). This is a statement difficult to understand, as no lightning or fire is explicitly otherwise mentioned as participating in the destruction of the fleet. But the presence of fire here might allude to Nauplius' own fires on Mount Caphareus in Euboea: Clytaemestra's beacons would thus retrospectively confuse themselves with those of Nauplius.¹⁰²

words. On the 'triad' weights, measures, and number see Soph. fr. 432 Radt, with the important contribution of Heinemann 1975, who, however, seems excessively optimistic about the connotations of this triad. In this passage, I would not be so certain.

¹⁰⁰ Of course other inventions too can turn sour: Scodel 1980: 129 points out that notwithstanding the hero's discovery of law, he ends being worsted in a debate. The Euripidean questioning must have been very deep indeed in the Trojan plays of 415 (see Scodel 1980, *passim*, but esp. 105–21).

¹⁰¹ Brilliant discussion in Goldhill 1984: 49–51 (much of what follows in Goldhill is relevant to the broader issue of the perception of oral speech and debate versus written communication).

¹⁰² Nauplius' children did intervene in some versions of the story of the Atridae: in Eur. *Or.* 432 Orestes in talking to Menelaus acknowledges that Oeax hates him, because of the role of Agamemnon in the death of his father; Hygin. *Fab.* 117, 1 and Dictys 6. 2 relate that Oeax informed Clytaemestra of Agamemnon's return with Cassandra; Paus. 1. 22. 6 describes a painting on which the children of Nauplius came to the help of Aegisthus.

Thus a discourse on signals and the meaning of signs is certainly an early component of the myth of Palamedes, going back to the *Nostoi* and to Nauplius' revenge; this discourse was pursued in drama and elsewhere, also independently of the figure of Palamedes. The connection between (alphabetic) writing and long-distance communication is, however, secondary; the Greek (or Athenian?) defiance towards letter writing and its uses finds a reflection in the fifth- and fourth-century treatments of the myth of Palamedes.¹⁰³

3.3.2. The Queen and the Tyrant

Two texts looking at the invention of writing specifically as a means for long-distance communication help to further define the connotations that the Greeks associated with letter writing. According to a fragment of the historian Hellanicus preserved in two different, late sources, the oriental queen Atossa received an education similar to that of a man; when she succeeded to her father's throne, she introduced some reforms, among which were the custom of wearing a tiara and the ample oriental trousers called *anaxyrides*, the custom of employing in one's service eunuchs, and that of administering justice by way of letters (καὶ διὰ βιβλίων τὰς ἀποκρίσεις ποιέισθαι, *FGrH* 4 F 178a = Anon. *De Mulier.* 7).¹⁰⁴ The introduction of letters to administer justice is mentioned in the context of a series of innovations that, from the Greek point of view, are all marked negatively, as inversions of the normal order: a woman should not be brought up as a man, and should not take up kingship; giving power to a woman is dangerous, and queens are often rather irresponsible characters. The wearing of a tiara and of oriental trousers (the latter also worn by the Amazons, according to Greek mythology), as well as the decision to use eunuchs are also usually viewed as negative things. It thus seems reasonable to attribute a markedly oriental—and negative—character also to the last of Atossa's innovations, the institution of judgements through letters instead of the oral, 'democratic' process (known for instance from Athenian practice). Women in Greek tradition are linked to letter writing in a number of intriguing ways (Gorgo at Sparta, for instance, or Sappho, as portrayed in the

¹⁰³ Also in later tradition letters will remain linked to Palamedes: in the speech *Odysseus, or Against Palamedes for Treason* attributed to Alcidas (probably a product of the second sophistic: O'Sullivan 2008; but see Jenkins 2006: 30–6, who considers it an answer to Gorgias' *Palamedes*), a message engraved on an arrow that misses its aim is the main (but paradoxically absent) item of accusation; according to Ampelius, a letter of Palamedes was preserved, together with some other rather extraordinary documents, in a temple in Sikyon (*Amp. Lib. Mem.* 8. 5); and Tzetzes (*Alleg. Il., Prol.* 402–5) had Palamedes carry to Troy, in the context of an embassy aiming at persuading the Trojans to return Helen peacefully, a letter by Clytaemestra exhorting her sister to come back.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F 178b = Tatian. *Πρὸς Ἑλλήνας*, 1: καὶ ἐπιστολὰς συντάσσειν [εἶδεν] ἢ Περσῶν ποτε ἡγησαμένη γυνή, καθά φησιν Ἑλλάνικος· Ἀτοσσα δὲ ὄνομα αὐτῇ [ἡν]). This Atossa is not the wife of Darius I and mother of Xerxes, but an Assyrian queen, assimilated at times (possibly first by Ctesias?) to Semiramis. The Greek chronographical tradition locates her reign in the eighteenth place in the list of Assyrian kings compiled by Castor (*FGrH* 250 F 1). This would correspond to the years 1497–1476; cf. Jacoby's commentary *ad FGrH* 4 F 178. Justin 1. 2. 1 ff. preserves a related account: his Semiramis has many traits in common with Atossa (trousers, tiara), but the innovation of giving royal answers through intermediaries is attributed to her son Ninyas (1. 2. 12). On these traditions see Porciani 1997: 157–60; Gera 1997: 141–50.

homonymous play by the comic poet Antiphanes); but women are never listed among the inventors that benefited humanity. This is a unique case: only an oriental woman could have been an inventor, and from such an odd inventor one should not expect anything straightforward. Where Hellanicus came across this information is not known; a comparison with the more general tendencies of his work has led Kleingünther to suspect that this information originates with him, or at any rate that it does not depend on an earlier historiographical tradition.¹⁰⁵

This same invention—the introduction of letters to administer justice, and more generally for administrative purposes—is attributed by Herodotus (1. 99–100) to Deioces the Mede, in a context that accompanies the institution of a centralized and absolutist power. Deioces, after first having gained a reputation for justice in publicly solving disputes, refuses to keep putting his skills to the service of the community unless he is given sovereign power; he then fortifies his residence, and orders that nobody may have access to the king, and that all communications must be through intermediaries, that is, messengers (δὲ ἀγγέλων); similarly, concerning the administration of justice, Deioces orders that all suits be written down and transmitted to him for consideration; his decisions are similarly sent out in writing. Herodotus explains this strategy in terms of the need for Deioces to create a distance between the ruler and the other Medes of his generation (σύντροφοι): the new ruler needs this distance, otherwise his contemporaries, knowing that they come from no lesser families than Deioces and that they are not his inferiors, might resent him and possibly even attempt to overthrow him. By hiding from their view, Deioces can present himself as different (ἐτεροῖός σφι δοκέει εἶναι μὴ ὁρώσι). Paradoxically the letter, an instrument meant to allow and facilitate communication notwithstanding distance, is also the instrument that allows communication while imposing distance—this is the message of these stories, not accidentally (dis)located in the world of the Near East.¹⁰⁶ Deioces' request that communication between himself and his subjects take place only through intermediaries and writing has also another important consequence: because each person writes individually to the king, and receives an individual answer, the 'horizontal' communication between the members of the community, the collective dialogue on judicial matters, is severed.¹⁰⁷

3.4. A GREEK NARRATIVE OF THE BEGINNINGS OF A GENRE

Let us now focus on how the Greeks represented to themselves the origin of the formulae they used in their letters. Ancient perceptions and representations of the development of letter writing are a crucial part of the analysis, since it is through

¹⁰⁵ Women and letters: see below, ch. 5. Hellanicus' sources: Kleingünther 1933: 125–31.

¹⁰⁶ Porciani 1997: 159–60. Steiner 1994: 8 (and 130–2 specifically on Deioces) considers this to be true of all forms of writing. Bertrand 1999: 86–8 compares with Plato, *Statesman* 295a–e and *Laws* 859a (writing as the sign of the absence of the legislator/king). See also below, 126 n. 76, on the role played by direct (but individual, not public) contact in the story of Maeandrius of Samos.

¹⁰⁷ Bertrand 1999: 87–8.

them that we are able to perceive the ancient discourse, as well as the ideological take, on letter writing.

The diversity in the form of the earliest letters, when compared to the standardized form later taken by epistolary communication, had not eluded the ancients, and, as one would expect, there were questions on how this form had originated and on its relationship with oral messages. An ancient commentator on the *Plutus* of Aristophanes mentions a monograph on the greeting *χαίρειν* by a certain Dionysius; however, the treatise is lost.¹⁰⁸ The best testimony of the ancient discussions on the form and the evolution of Greek epistolary writing is a small treatise by Lucian, *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting*. Its value as 'hard evidence' is limited, because Lucian could not make use of archaic private or public letters; he was writing in a period (the second century AD) when the evolution we are interested in had long taken place; he had to rely on letters and forms of greetings transmitted through literary tradition, and shaped by it. More importantly, Lucian himself is not a neutral observer interested in the how and when and why. Nonetheless, his discussion opens a fascinating vista on what a cultivated Greek writer of the second sophistic thought of a genre, letter writing in its various forms, that by then had imposed itself as central (collections of letters, authentic or forged, will know an extraordinary growth in importance, from the Hellenistic period onwards).¹⁰⁹

Lucian's *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting* opens with the narrator recounting an error he has just committed in a greeting: he has used for a morning visit a type of greeting, *ὕγιαίνειν* (literally: 'be in good health'), that is appropriate for the evening. In order to console himself for this error, he decides to write a small treatise on the subject, to prove that his slip is not inexcusable. The narrator begins by sketching the three main types of greeting: *χαίρειν*, *εὖ πράττειν*, *ὕγιαίνειν*. Of these, *χαίρειν* ('Rejoice', or 'Joy') appears to be the most ancient: and the narrator proceeds to give instances of the use of *χαίρειν* in both oral and written greetings. Examples taken from oral greetings in tragedy and the epos show that the term could be used at any moment of the day, whenever two persons met, and even at the moment of parting company (Luc. *Laps.* 2).¹¹⁰ After this statement about the temporal indeterminacy of the greeting with *χαίρειν*, the narrator goes on to stress the semantic indeterminacy of the term: 'Nor was it [the address with *χαίρειν*] necessarily significative of friendliness; it could express hatred and the determination to see no more of another. To wish much joy to someone indicates that one

¹⁰⁸ Schol. Ar. *Plut.* 322 c: *περὶ τοῦ ἐν τῇ συνηθείᾳ χαίρειν τοῦ τε ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς, γέγραπται Διονυσίῳ μονόβιβλον περὶ αὐτοῦ*, 'Concerning the greeting used in common intercourse and in the letters, Dionysius has written a monograph on it'. Who this Dionysius may have been is unknown: Chantry 1994 *ad loc.* suggests Dionysius of Halicarnassus or Dionysius Thrax. See further Gerhard 1904: 40–8; Sykutris 1931: 189–92.

¹⁰⁹ For the fortune of pseudepigraphical epistolary collections see Rosenmeyer 2001: 193–223; for the manipulations of the letter form in the period of the second sophistic, Koenig 2007; Hodkinson 2007a and 2007b.

¹¹⁰ The double use, as a greeting at the moment of meeting, but also at the parting, explains (and gives more pregnancy to) the use of *χαίρειν* in funerary epigrams; see also the *χαίρε/χαίρετε* at the end of most Homeric hymns, with Calame 2005. Wachter 1998 sees the origin of the greeting with *χαίρειν* in the request to someone else (god or man) to accept a gift; see Calame 2005: 26 and n. 22 for the notion of reciprocal pleasure entailed by the use of *χαίρειν*.

ceases to care about them.¹¹¹ Of course this serves the cause of the narrator, and one might be tempted to take this as an over-interpretation on the part of Lucian. But when construed with *ἔαν* and an accusative (of a person or a thing), *χαίρειν* does indeed mean ‘to dismiss from one’s mind’, ‘to renounce’; this same sense is found also in constructions with *verba dicendi* (the overall effect is ironical, as an instance from Euripides’ *Hippolytus* shows, *τὴν Κύπριν πόλλ’ ἐγὼ χαίρειν λέγω*, ‘As for Cyprius, I send her many greetings’, 113). Moreover, the composed forms *ἐπιχαίρω* and *καταχαίρω* are attested with the meaning of ‘to rejoice over’ (usually a disaster that has befallen an enemy), and ‘to rejoice at the expense of someone else’.¹¹²

After thus establishing that the commonest greeting, *χαίρειν*, was indeterminate in terms of when it was used, and could have very negative connotations, the narrator proceeds to examine the first official uses of the term. The first person to have made use of *χαίρειν* as a greeting is found to have been Philippides, the runner who, according to Lucian, announced to the Athenian archons the news of the victory at Marathon:

Πρώτος δ’ αὐτὸ Φιλίππιδης ὁ ἡμεροδρομήσας λέγεται ἀπὸ Μαραθῶνος ἀγγέλλων τὴν νίκην εἰπεῖν πρὸς τοὺς ἄρχοντας καθήμενους καὶ πεφροντικότητας ὑπὲρ τοῦ τέλους τῆς μάχης, Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν, καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν συναποθανεῖν τῇ ἀγγελίᾳ καὶ τῷ χαίρειν συνεκπνεῦσαι. (Lucian, *Laps.* 3)

Philippides the dispatch-runner is said to have been the first, when bringing the news of the victory of Marathon, to have said to the archons seated and tense about the issue of the battle, ‘Rejoice, we win’. And having said this he died with his message, breathing his last in the word ‘joy’.

The other instance of a greeting with *χαίρειν* offered by the narrator is again an official one, but this time it is in a written, epistolary form: Cleon was allegedly the first to compose a letter beginning with *χαίρειν*, when he announced to the Athenians the good news of the victory at Sphacteria; after him, the narrator hastens to add, Nicias writing from Sicily went back to the old habit of beginning *in medias res*.¹¹³

The rest of the small treatise (nineteen paragraphs) does not mention the greeting *χαίρειν* any more: it is exclusively dedicated to *εὖ πράττειν* and *ὕγιαίνειν*. The proportion shows unequivocally how biased the discussion is: because he had erroneously greeted his patron with *ὕγιαίνειν* instead of *χαίρειν*, the narrator, after having established in what conditions *χαίρειν*, the most common epistolary greeting, was used, and after having made clear both explicitly and implicitly, through his choice of examples, that the salutation *χαίρειν* is not always really

¹¹¹ Lucian, *Laps.* 2: καὶ οὐ μόνον φιλοφροσύνης αὐτοῖς ἦν τοῦτο σύμβολον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπεχθείας καὶ τοῦ μηκέτι χρήσεσθαι ἀλλήλοις. τὸ γοῦν μακρὰ χαίρειν φράσαι τὸ μηκέτι φροντιεῖν δηλοῖ.

¹¹² For the meanings of *χαίρω*, *ἐπιχαίρω* and *καταχαίρω* see LSJ, s.v., and Chantraine 1999: 1240–1. Two Herodotean instances of situations in which *καταχαίρων* is used in a very ambiguous, or downright negative way (in the sense of rejoicing over the other’s misfortunes) are discussed below, 119–21.

¹¹³ Luc. *Laps.* 3: ἐν ἐπιστολῇ δὲ ἀρχῇ Κλέων ὁ Ἀθηναῖος δημαγωγὸς ἀπὸ Σφακτηρίας πρῶτον χαίρειν προῦθηκεν εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν νίκην τὴν ἐκεῖθεν καὶ τὴν τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν ἄλωσιν. καὶ ὅμως γε μετ’ ἐκείνον ὁ Νικίας ἀπὸ Σικελίας ἐπιστέλλων ἐν τῷ ἀρχαίῳ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν διέμεινε ἀπ’ αὐτῶν ἀρξάμενος τῶν πραγμάτων.

auspicious (note the extraordinary insistence on the coincidence between salutation and death in the story of Philippiades), concentrates on positive instances of the use of the other greetings.¹¹⁴

Keeping in mind this evident bias, we may try to evaluate the information Lucian gives about the use of *χαίρειν*. The first important element is that Lucian puts together oral and written forms of greeting. Of course he is relying for all of his examples on the literary (written) tradition, but he begins with instances of oral greeting and communication, and then moves towards written communication. He thus sees oral and written communication as a continuum. The one formal difference is due to the different enunciative situation: oral greetings (as presented in literary texts) are always delivered as imperatives (*χαίρε, χαίρετε*), because the person is present and facing the addressee; written greetings are always in the infinitive (*χαίρειν*, with an implied *λέγει*), because the greeting is mediated.¹¹⁵

Second, it is mildly surprising, to say the least, to find that the first instance of the use of this type of greeting, even with the restriction to an official context, should be dated to 490 BC: because the previous references to the epos and to tragedy had shown, if there had been any need of it, that the term was, at least in the literary tradition, well attested as a normal form of greeting. *Χαίρειν* is also well attested as a form of greeting in sepulchral inscriptions, starting at least from the mid-sixth century BC, in the imperative, as an apostrophe either to the passers-by, with *χαίρετε*, or to the deceased, with *χαίρε*.¹¹⁶ Interestingly, however, the term is not found in the earliest documentary letters, nor in the earliest literary letters, those preserved in Herodotus and Thucydides. So, after all, there may be something in Lucian's relatively late dating for this type of greeting.

Third, the story of the *hemerodromos* who announces *Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν*, and having said as much, expires, is a brilliant opportunity for a narrator whose narrative takes as its point of departure the fact that he has erroneously said

¹¹⁴ Possibly taking some liberties along the way. Plato uses *εὖ πράττειν*, as Lucian says (*Laps*. 4); if Plato *Letter* 3. 315 A 6 opens with *χαίρειν*, this is followed by a discussion in which preference is given to *εὖ πράττειν* (as in Plat. *Charm.* 164 D–E). The preserved letters of Epicurus, however, have *χαίρειν* (see *To Herodotus*, 35; *To Pythocles*, 83; *To Menoeceus*, 121), and not *ὑγιαίνειν*, as Luc. *Laps*. 6 claims. Diog. Laert. 3. 61 concurs with Lucian; but his reference to Epicurus and Cleon in the catalogue of Plato's works, *Ἐπιστολαὶ τρεισκαίδεκα, ἡθικαὶ*—*ἐν αἷς ἔγραφεν εὖ πράττειν, Ἐπίκουρος δὲ εὖ διάγειν, Κλέων χαίρειν*, is a clear give-away of the fact that this comes from the same source. The same applies to the *Suda* ε 3664, *Εὖ πράττειν*: οὕτως ἡ ἐπιγραφή τῶν ἐπιστολῶν Πλάτωνος, ἔγραψε δὲ ἐπιστολὰς ὑ'. εἰσὶ δὲ τοῦ ἡθικοῦ εἶδους. εὖ διάγειν: οὕτως Ἐπίκουρος ἐπέγραψε: χαίρειν δὲ ἐπέγραψε Κλέων. *Suda* χ 156 (*Χαίρετω ληρόν: ἐρυθριάτω φλυαρόν. καὶ χαίρειν, οἰμώζειν, στενάζειν*, also in *Et. Gen.*, *Et. M.* 808.2, 3), putting together blushing at talking nonsense, and *χαίρειν* with the meaning of 'moaning', 'groaning', also corresponds closely to the opening of Lucian's treatise, in which the narrator begins by blushing at his blunder. Koskeniemi 1956: 163 believes, however, in the correctness of Lucian and Diogenes' information; see Inwood 2007: 143 for the view that the preserved letters of Epicurus have been 'normalized' through the substitution of *χαίρειν* for the original *ὑγιαίνειν*.

¹¹⁵ Only with the first century AD do apostrophic epistolary opening formulae with the optative *χαίροις* appear; the imperative apostrophic epistolary greeting *χαίρε* is attested from the second century AD. see Gerhard 1905: 38–52 (and Gerhard 1905: 27–38 with Lallot 1997: i, 228–32 for a fascinating close discussion of Apollonius Dyscolus' take on the letter prescript, in *On Syntax* 3. 63–77, 329–41 Uhlig); Exler 1923: 53–4 and 73; Klauck 2006: 18–19; and compare with the early letters discussed above, 35–47.

¹¹⁶ See above, 57 n. 128.

ὑγιαίνειν ('be in good health'), instead of pronouncing the usual morning greeting χαίρειν. In opening his survey, the narrator had indeed stated—tongue-in-cheek, of course—that he had initially thought his task would be a difficult one, but that to his surprise he had found a lot of material.¹¹⁷ But exactly how good an opportunity is such a story—how ancient is it? Can we trust it?

The *hemerodromos* Pheidippides (Philippides?) makes his first appearance in Herodotus, in connection with the battle of Marathon.¹¹⁸ In 6. 105–6, Herodotus narrates that when the Athenian *strategoi* realized that the Persians had landed in Marathon, they sent Pheidippides to Sparta to ask for help. He covered the distance (c.240 km) on foot in two days, meeting Pan along the way; he arrived in Sparta on the day following his departure from Athens, and delivered to the Spartan magistrates a message comprising an address in the vocative, followed directly by the body of the message—but no greetings.¹¹⁹ He then did not die, but came back to Athens, to report to the Athenians his encounter with Pan, and the Spartans' refusal to move before the full moon. Neither Herodotus nor any other ancient source ever mentions his death; Lucian's version is unique. And it refers to a very different 'run': in Lucian, Philippides covers the distance between Marathon and Athens—this is the origin of the length of our modern marathon-run.

There were, however, at least two other versions concerning the run from Marathon to Athens; both are preserved by Plutarch. In his *De glor. Ath.* 347c (= Heracleides fr. 156 Wehrli), Plutarch states that according to Heracleides of Pontus, a near contemporary of Plato, the news of Marathon was brought to Athens by Thersippus of Eroiades; 'but most writers say that it was Eucles who ran in his armour, hot from the battle, and bursting in through the doors of the most important magistrates, said only "rejoice" and "we are happy", and then immediately expired.'¹²⁰ Lucian's version appears to conflate the Herodotean story and that attributed by Plutarch to 'most writers', possibly in order to make fun of the *communis opinio*, as Frost has suggested. Unluckily Plutarch does not give any details on what Heracleides said happened to Thersippus (another horsey name, interestingly) after bringing the news, nor is it self-evident that we should attribute

¹¹⁷ The tongue-in-cheek approach is betrayed even at the level of terminology: Lucian says, Ἀρχόμενος μὲν οὖν τῆς γραφῆς πάντῃ ἀπόρῳ ἐντεύξεσθαι ὥμην τῷ προβλήματι (*Laps.* 2), 'I began to write expecting to find the problem impossible to solve'—ἐντυγχάνω means 'to meet' (here: with a problem), but an ἐντευξις is one of the commonest types of letter, the petition (described, after Bikerman 1930, in Koskeniemi 1956: 159–60).

¹¹⁸ Pheidippides is the reading of the better manuscript family; all other Herodotean manuscripts, and all the later tradition, have Philippides. Badian 1979 defends (convincingly, to my mind) Pheidippides; Frost 1979 takes the other view.

¹¹⁹ Hdt. 6. 106. 1–2: ἀπικόμενος δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἔλεγε 'ὦ Λακεδαιμόνιοι, Ἀθηναῖοι ὄμειν δέονται σφίσι βοηθήσαι [...]. The story is recounted also by Paus. 1. 28. 4 and 8. 54. 6; Poll. 3. 148. 16; schol. Ael. Arist. p. 51 and 251 Frommel; Nep. *Milt.* 4.3; Plin. *NH* 7. 20. 84 (whence Solin. *Coll.* 1. 98 p. 25. 10 Mommsen). Cf. Frost 1979; Badian 1979.

¹²⁰ Frost 1979 discusses the relationship between these and other stories of extraordinary runs with death at their end. The text of Plutarch has been subjected to many corrections, one of which concerns the announcement: where all codices have τοσοῦτον μόνον εἰπεῖν 'χαίρετε' καὶ 'χαίρομαι' (which is also the text of Nachstädt's Teubner edition), the Budé editors Thiolier and Frazier, following Cobet and because of Lucian *Laps.* 3, write 'χαίρετε' καὶ 'νικῶμαι'. But, as Gallo and Mocci point out (Plutarco, *La gloria di Atene* (Naples, 1992)), the text is meaningful as it is; the notion of reciprocity, which is structurally part of the greeting χαίρε, also speaks for the transmitted text.

to Thersippus the same message as that of Eucles. This means that we cannot know whether the greeting with *χαίρετε* had entered the tradition already by the time of Heracleides; at any rate, it is unlikely to have been much earlier.¹²¹

What of the other instance offered by the narrator of a greeting with *χαίρειν*, the one concerning Cleon? Can we use it to pinpoint a transformation, in the Athenian context, of the epistolary opening form of address? This is again a 'first', but this time, an epistolary first use of *χαίρειν*, supposedly taking place in 424 BC, after the Athenian capture of the Spartans blockaded on the island of Sphacteria. Two passages from comic plays of this period mention a special greeting; their late commentators interpret these greetings in connection with the story also told by Lucian.

In the antepirrhema that closes the parabasis of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, the coryphaeus mentions an encounter between the Clouds and the Moon:

ἡνίχ' ἡμεῖς δεῦρ' ἀφορμάσθαι παρεσκευάσμεθα,
ἢ Σελήνῃ ξυντυχούσ' ἡμῖν ἐπέστειλεν φράσαι
πρῶτα μὲν χαίρειν Ἀθηναίοισι καὶ τοῖς ξυμμάχοις·
εἶτα θυμαίνειν ἔφασκε· δεινὰ γὰρ πεπονθέναι,
ὠφελούσ' ὑμᾶς ἀπαντας οὐ λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐμφανώς. (Ar. *Nub.* 607–11)

When we were ready to set out on our journey here, the Moon happened to run into us and instructed us first of all to convey her greetings to the Athenians and their allies; and then she said she was annoyed, because she had been shamefully treated despite having helped you all not with mere words but with plain action.

(Trans. Henderson modified)

As pointed out by all commentators, the inclusion in the greeting of the allies points to official language.¹²² But it is very difficult to know whether Aristophanes is here simply alluding to a message sent through a messenger, and transmitted orally (as for instance in Ar. *Lys.* 1074–5, where the coryphaeus addresses the Spartan representatives with *ἄνδρες Λάκωνες, πρῶτα μὲν μοι χαίρετε, | εἰτ' εἴπαθ' ἡμῖν, πῶς ἔχοντες ἦκετε*, 'Men of Lacedaemon, first greetings to you, then tell us, for what reason you have come'), or whether the public could hear in the greeting with *χαίρειν*, preceded by *ἐπέστειλεν*, an allusion to the formula which will become standard in epistolary writing. As we have seen, *ἐπιστέλλω* and *ἐπιστολή* are not yet specific enough.¹²³ Even more difficult is the question of what exactly is the punchline of this passage: is Aristophanes having fun out of using substandard

¹²¹ The anecdote may come from Heracleides' *Dialogues*, a work in which Heracleides used historical figures to make philosophical points; Wehrli 1967 classifies the fragment among the 'Historisches unbestimmter Herkunft', adding—his only comment—that 'it must be an accident' ('es muß Zufall sein') if in fr. 149 the first beneficiary of Solon's law that the state should take care of the wounded in war is called Thersippus; fr. 149 is also transmitted in Plutarch, *Solon* 31.2.

¹²² Van Leeuwen 1898 *ad v.* 609 refers to Ar. *Av.* 879 and to the parodic Pherecr. fr. 39 K.–A., from the *Graes* (*Old Women*): *Ἀθηναίαις αὐταῖς τε καὶ ταῖς συμμάχοις* ('To the Athenian women and their allies'). Kassel and Austin add a number of further parallels, both literary and epigraphical, among which Thuc. 4. 117. 3. Interestingly, in fr. 38 K.–A. of Pherecrates' *Graes* it is question of sending a dove as a messenger (*ἀπόπεμψον ἀγγέλλοντα τὸν περιστερὸν*): fr. 38 and 39 K.–A. might have been connected; with a dove as a messenger, the message would have had to consist of a sign or signs, although not necessarily written ones.

¹²³ Discussion above, 17–18, 38, 44–6, and 56; below, 118, 199–200, 241.

official language? Is he punning on the meanings of *χαίρω*? As we have seen, the term covers quite a range of meanings, and in this specific passage it does not necessarily imply an innocent greeting.¹²⁴ At any rate, verbs of ‘saying’ appear twice (*φράσαι* and *ἔφασκε*) in the transmission of the Moon’s message; this means that even though it is possible to see an allusion to official epistolary communication in this passage, such communication is still being moulded along the parameters of oral messages.

The scholia to this passage offer further information: they report a story according to which the greeting alludes to a letter sent by Cleon to the Athenians after the victory at Sphacteria (the first *Clouds* was produced in 423, just after the victory).¹²⁵ Although Cleon is not mentioned anywhere in the antepirrhema of *Clouds*, he is the central character of the epirrhema; and there is scholarly consensus on the fact that the epirrhema and antepirrhema of *Clouds* are closely related. For our purposes, particularly interesting is the reference in the epirrhema to the Moon going out of her path at the moment of Cleon’s election to the *strategia* (*Nub.* 584), for it forms a pendant to the Moon’s message in the antepirrhema; the audience might have perceived the message being now sent as related to the Moon’s former action and consequently to Cleon.¹²⁶ A real letter by Cleon might thus—but just ‘might’—be behind the message of the Aristophanic Moon.

Eupolis fr. 331 K.–A. may also allude to this same letter by Cleon:

πρώτος γὰρ ἡμᾶς, ὦ Κλέων, | χαίρειν προσείπας πολλά λυπῶν τὴν πόλιν¹²⁷

For you were the first, Cleon, to address us with ‘Rejoice’ (or ‘Forget it!’), you who caused so much grief to the city.

On this fragment the ancient commentators provide information which, while potentially extremely interesting, is not univocal, besides being very difficult to evaluate. We have no ancient indication of the play from which the fragment came. Hypotheses have of course been advanced. Bergk proposed the *Chrysoun genos* (*Golden Race*), a play that could have been brought on stage in 424 BC, that is, at the right moment for an allusion to Sphacteria (but a date of 426 BC has been recently suggested for the play, which would lead to the exclusion of any links with

¹²⁴ Most translations of Aristophanic plays tend to translate *χαίρειν*, here and elsewhere, simply with ‘greetings’; yet LSJ lists most comic instances of *χαίρειν* (this one too) under III. 2c, ‘dismiss, renounce’. It may have worked as a kind of standing joke, to be made explicit by the gestures and intonation of the actor.

¹²⁵ Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 609a: *πρώτα μὲν χαίρειν· τὸν Κλέονα φασιν ἀπὸ τῆς Πύλου καὶ Σφακτηρίας τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἐπιστέλλοντα ‘χαίρειν’ προθεῖναι· ὅπερ γέγονεν ἐν χρήσει.*

¹²⁶ Parts of the first *Clouds* were integrated in the reworking of the play. The epirrhema certainly comes from the first version of *Clouds* (Cf. Dover 1968: lxxx–xcviii, and *ad* 584); the closeness of the antepirrhema to the epirrhema in meter, number of verses, and character (Dover 1968, *ad* 607–26) is such as to make it very likely that both belonged to the first version of *Clouds*. Note in particular the nice contrast between the support accorded visibly (*ἐμφανῶς*) by the Moon (v. 611) and her eclipse at the election of Cleon (v. 584).

¹²⁷ Kaibel in 1895 suggested reading *πρώτον* (adverbial) rather than *πρώτος* in Eupolis fr. 331 K.–A. (‘for first you said to us *χαίρειν* . . .’), comparing Ar. *Nub.* 608–9, where there is also an adverbial *πρώτα μὲν*; this would have solved the issue of Cleon’s being the ‘first’ greeting. He was followed by Gerhard 1905: 48–9; Kassel–Austin maintain the transmitted *πρώτος*.

the Pylos/Sphacteria affair).¹²⁸ Storey suggests that the fragment might rather be attributed to the *Demoi*.¹²⁹ This play featured the return to Athens of four great leaders, Solon, Aristides, Miltiades, and Pericles; Cleon might have been put forward as one of the candidates to return to Athens in the course of an initial scene of necromancy, or of raising of the dead.¹³⁰ The difficulty with this is that *Demoi* is usually thought to have been performed in 412 BC, although 417 BC and 410 BC have also been proposed, and while an allusion to Cleon in a play of this period is possible, it is less likely than in a play performed in the period of Cleon's leadership. Cleon is explicitly made fun of only once more in all of Eupolis' fragments, in fr. 316, from the *Chrysoun genos*; yet this may be an accident of transmission, as jokes concerning him will have figured in other plays.¹³¹ Kassel and Austin have left the fragment among those *incertae fabulae*; similarly, Olson is non-committal as to which play the fragment came from, but suggests for it a date to 424–422 BC, which would suit the context I have been sketching.¹³²

The lexicographer Moeris, who transmits the fragment, describes Cleon's *χαίρειν* as the first one ever used in a letter:

χαίρειν ἐν ἐπιστολῇ πρῶτος λέγεται γράψαι Κλέων Ἀθηναίους μετὰ <τὸ> λαβεῖν τὴν Πύλον. ἔνθεν τὸν κωμικὸν ἐπισκώπτοντα εἰπεῖν· (the text of the fragment follows)

Cleon is said to have been the first to write 'greetings' in a letter to the Athenians after taking Pylos. For this reason the comedian, making fun of him, said: . . .¹³³

A series of authors concur with this statement: besides Lucian (the oldest datable source for this story), other late sources affirm that Cleon was the first to send an official letter to the Athenians, greeting them with *χαίρειν*. In particular, a scholiast to the *Plutus* of Aristophanes preserves (or at least, believes he preserves) the beginning of the letter in question.¹³⁴ In it, Cleon addressed the Athenians directly:

¹²⁸ Storey 2003: 266–7.

¹²⁹ Storey 1995–6: 142–3.

¹³⁰ Storey 2003: 112–14 dates the *Demoi* to 417 or 416 BC; Telò and Porciani 2002 to 410 BC. The idea that Cleon might have been one of the characters from the Underworld is suggested in Storey 1995–6: 143; important general discussion of the play in Storey 2003: 111–74. On the issue of Cleon's letter, Gerhard 1905: 38–41 is worth consulting.

¹³¹ For references to Cleon in Eupolis see Storey 2003: 343–4 and 384–6.

¹³² Olson 2007: 191.

¹³³ Moeris χ 37 (213, 31) speaks simply of 'a' comic poet; the attribution to Eupolis results from the emendation of a passage of the *Suda*, attributing the story to the fourth-century comic poet Eubulus (*Suda*, ed. Adler, χαίρειν 162: τοῦτο ἐστὶ προσαγόρευσις ἀπαλασσομένων ἢ καὶ προσερχομένων· ἐτίθετο κατ'ἀρχὰς τῶν ἐπιστολῶν. . . ὅψε ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς προστεθῆναι τινες νομίζουσιν· ἀπλῶς δ' οὕτως ἀλλήλοις ἐπιστέλλειν, οἷον Ἀμασις Πολυκράτει τάδε λέγει. πρῶτον δὲ Κλέωνα φησὶν Εὐβούλος ὁ κωμικὸς οὕτως ἐπιστεῖλαι τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἀπὸ Σφακτηρίας, ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ὑπερησθῆναι· ἀγνοῶν, ὅτι καὶ οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐχρῶντο καὶ προσηγόρευον οὕτως ἀλλήλους, οὐ μόνον τὸ πρῶτον ἐντυγχάνοντες, ὥς ἡμεῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ διαλυόμενοι ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, ἀντὶ τοῦ ὑγιαίνειν καὶ ἐρρῶσθαι, χαίρειν διεκελεύοντο ἀλλήλοις). Fritzsche's emendation has been accepted by Bergk, *Commentationum de reliquiis comoediae Atticae antiquae libri duo* (Leipzig, 1838), 362, by Meineke, and by Kassel–Austin (see their apparatus *ad loc.*), but not by Adler.

¹³⁴ The scholiast is discussing a passage of the *Plutus* in which Chremylus addresses the chorus, vv. 322–3: χαίρειν μὲν ὑμᾶς ἐστὶν ὧνδρες δημόται | ἀρχαῖον ᾗδὴ προσαγορεύειν καὶ σαπρὸν, "To say, "Greetings, my dear neighbours!" is old-fashioned and musty"); Chremylus then uses the more formal (? cf. *Plutus* 1042) ἀσπάζομαι.

Κλέων Ἀθηναίων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν. (Schol. Ar. *Plut.* 322c Chantry)

Cleon to the *boule* and the *demos* of the Athenians, greetings.

There are however ancient opponents of this story, even though what is contested is never that Cleon sent a written message, but only its exceptional status. Thus, a scholion to the *Clouds* states: 'Notwithstanding what some people say, Cleon was not the first one to write letters in this way.'¹³⁵

Did Cleon indeed send a letter greeting the Athenians with *χαίρειν*? Was this letter really the first one addressing the Athenian assembly with a *χαίρειν*, or does the 'first' refer rather to the fact that Cleon would have been the first to write to the Athenians with news of the victory? Should we consider this entire story a later construct, based on a text, that of Eupolis, whose specific context was lost, and on its connection—not necessarily correct—with the already discussed passage of the *Clouds*? The latter is Storey's position: for him, the greeting with *χαίρειν* was already common at the time of Cleon, and the main point of the Eupolis fragment is to be found not in the use of *χαίρειν* in an official, public context, but in the contrast, already present in tragedy, between joy and suffering, *χαίρειν* and *λυπεῖν*.¹³⁶ This may indeed have been the principal effect aimed at by the poet, who may, moreover, have played on the other meaning of *χαίρειν*. Thus, even though here it is difficult to reach certainty, the story is likely to have been made up; at any rate, Lucian's account is very much open to suspicion.¹³⁷

However, the greeting with *χαίρειν* cannot have been frequent in official communications. The numerous passages cited by Storey in support of his claim that the official greeting with *χαίρειν* was common by the second half of the fifth century do not offer good parallels.¹³⁸ These passages may be divided into two groups: those where the greeting is directed to the native land (so e.g. Eupolis fr. 99. 35: ὦ γῇ πατρώια χαίρε· σὲ γὰρ...); and those where the greeting is

¹³⁵ Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 609ba: ἀρχαῖον ἦν ἔθος προτάσσειν ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς τὸ χαίρειν. οὐ γάρ, ὥς τινες, Κλέων πρῶτος οὕτως ἐπέστευεν Ἀθηναίοις ἐκ Σφακτηρίας. (Same in schol. Ar. *Nub.* 609bβ.) Similar opposition is registered in the *Suda* χ 164: Χαίρειν: ἀρχαῖον ἔθος τὸ ἐπιστολαῖς προστιθέναι τὸ χαίρειν. οἱ δὲ λέγοντες Κλέωνα πρῶτον χρήσασθαι τούτῳ, ψεύδονται, and in *Suda* χ 162.

¹³⁶ Storey 1995–6: 142, comparing Aesch. fr. 266 Radt: καὶ μήτε χαίρειν μήτε λυπεῖσθαι βροτούς, and Soph. *Aj.* 555.

¹³⁷ There might have been at some point in the transmission of these stories some intertextual 'horse-play' around the name Pheidippides (an amplification of Pheidippos, 'he who uses sparingly of, and so who cares for, his horse'). Lucian tells a unique story of a greeting pronounced with the runner's last breath, a variant on a well known Herodotean story, of which another variant is known, whose hero is a certain Thersippos ('Confident in his horse?'). In Lucian's account, this is followed by Cleon's greeting—alluded to possibly in *Clouds*, a piece presenting among its characters a Pheidippides. The story of how Pheidippides was given his name is the object of a long monologue on the part of Strepsiades; and the moon, which played a role in the Herodotean story, plays a role too in the epirrhema and antepirrhema of *Clouds*. The name itself is rare (the two only instances in *LGPN* ii are the *hemerodromos* of Herodotus and Lucian, and the Aristophanic character.) Note, however, a Pheidippidas from Thera, and a Pheidippides from Eretria in Euboea: *LGPN* i s.v. There are also, of course, in Attica and elsewhere a number of people called Philippides or Philippidas ('Lover of horses'), a much more common name, as well as forty-seven instances of people called Pheidippos.

¹³⁸ Storey mentions Eupolis fr. 99. 35; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 538; Aristophanes, *Pax* 582. To these one could add Aeschylus fr. 144 Radt, from the *Mysoi*; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 22 and 508; Euripides fr. 558 and 696 Kannicht, from the *Oineus* and the *Telephus* resp.; Euripides, *Orestes* 356 ff.; and Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 729 ff., to remain within the fifth century.

addressed to a god or to someone who has just arrived: that is to say, a situation completely different from that of a messenger who on arrival pronounces a greeting. Thus, in Aristophanes, *Pax* 582, the chorus greets Peace, who has just arrived (see also *Pax* 523); thus also in Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 538, the greeting (κῆρυξ Ἀχαιῶν χαῖρε τῶν ἀπὸ στρατοῦ) is pronounced by the chorus (and not by the messenger).¹³⁹ None of them is even remotely close to the type of message that Cleon sent, according to the scholiast on the *Plutus*. Neither the fifth-century documentary letters, nor those cited by the ancient historians (including Nicias' letter, sent in 414 BC, which, as Lucian says, 'went back to the old habit' of beginning without an introduction—and in this context it is unimportant whether it is a Thucydidean rewriting) present a standardized epistolary prescript. Cleon's greeting finds a comparison only in oral and informal apostrophes. Thus, part of the joke, both in Eupolis and in the *Clouds*, may have had to do with the use of χαίρειν in an official context (not necessarily in a letter).¹⁴⁰ At the same time, it is clear that there must have been some kind of debate over the right form of (public) address: in the early fourth century Aristophanes could have Chremylus in the *Plutus* dismiss the greeting with χαίρειν as 'old-fashioned and musty'.¹⁴¹

3.5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the traditions on the invention of writing has uncovered the existence of a profound division between everyday written prose and letter writing. The early narratives on the invention of writing had not focused on the function of the new craft, which was presented as something imported from the outside, and adopted more or less without difficulty. Slightly later traditions had attributed the invention of writing to a Greek culture-hero of Panhellenic or local status. These traditions had highlighted the ability of the written word to preserve information and had emphasized its potential for creativity, two aspects that have little to do with letter writing. Letters come to prominence and are problematized in a specifically Athenian context during the second part of the fifth century, through the development of the story of Palamedes first in drama and then among the sophists. In these accounts, letter writing is viewed negatively, as something that it is difficult to control. The accent is here on the difficulty of communication in general, and then specifically on the difficulties of epistolary communication. How far this perception of letter writing was shared outside Attica and outside the questioning of the tragedians and the discussions of the sophists is difficult to tell. And yet the two other accounts that include writing—epistolary writing, that is—among a list of innovations, preserved in Herodotus and Hellanicus, also present a strongly negative picture. According to these narratives, the purpose of letter

¹³⁹ Cf. Fraenkel 1950, *ad* 251 ff., *ad* 538 and 539, and *ad* 22, with numerous further examples.

¹⁴⁰ Note also Olson 2007: 211: 'Cleon's innovation may actually have been to include a common colloquial expression in a formal state communication', referring to Fritzsche.

¹⁴¹ Of course this is comic too; Aristophanes may be playing on tragedy's elevated style (e.g. the address of Aegeus in Eur. *Med.* 663–4: Μήδεια, χαῖρε: τοῦδε γὰρ προοίμιον | κάλλιον οὐδείς οἶδε προσφωνεῖν φίλους.)

writing is to enforce a distance, to render face-to-face communication impossible; not by accident is it invented by an Oriental queen or a Median tyrant.¹⁴² I would thus suggest that in Greece letter writing remained a marginal activity for a relatively long time, from its beginnings until the late fifth century. Not surprisingly, communication at a distance would have been viewed negatively in a face-to-face society; only in the fourth century did the habit of writing letters spread throughout society, and only in that same century did letters acquire a literary status.

Centuries later Lucian still preserves something of this uneasiness in his narrative of the evolution of the greeting formulae, when he stresses that Cleon was the first to use *χαίρειν* in an official document and notes that Nicias went back to the 'old habit' of beginning dispatches *in medias res*—that is, writing messages not couched in letter format. Lucian's sources are lost to us; but a few fragments of Old Comedy which imitate official communication would seem to confirm that, at least in an Athenian milieu in the fifth century BC, certain types of greetings were considered inappropriate for official communication. A detailed analysis of writing and letter-writing in tragedy and comedy (below, chapter 5) will permit further refinement of the analysis proposed here; meanwhile, in the next chapter, we shall look further into the connection between oral and written messages, and between letter-writing and tyrannical control.

¹⁴² Actually, in the story of Atossa as in that of Deioces, writing is probably imagined as pre-existing; but it comes into prominence only once turned into writing-for-communication, i.e. into letter writing. It is for this reason that I have discussed these narratives with those on the invention of writing.

When a Letter and Why?

Narrative Strategies in the Ancient Historians

Embedded letters are found in all sort of literary works: in tragedies and comedies, in novels, and in historical works. Their function is sometimes to advance the intrigue, sometimes to provide an insight into the thoughts of the characters, sometimes to provide the internal and external reader (or spectator) with information shared in a complicit way while leaving other characters in the dark. Recent contributions have helped illuminate the role and uses of letters in drama and in the novel.¹ Some attention has also been paid to their functioning in historiography: Rosenmeyer dedicates a chapter to a discussion of letters in Herodotus and Thucydides; these same authors had already been central, from different perspectives, to the studies of van den Hout, Longo, and Porciani.² But if one is interested in the historical development of the letter form and in its changing ideological connotations, it becomes necessary to pursue the analysis into the fourth century and beyond, for this is when letter writing becomes one of the most important means of communication. Focusing on the use of letters in historical narratives from Herodotus to Polybius offers the opportunity to survey developments and changes—or, conversely, the constants—in the use of writing for long-distance communication within one specific genre (historiography), and to obtain a more rounded picture of the modalities according to which Greek poleis chose to interact with other poleis, leagues, and kings, both in the fifth century and in the changed circumstances of the early Hellenistic period.

Besides the decision to chart the use of letters in the works of the ancient historians over a relatively long time-span (fifth to second century BC), I have made two other choices that should allow a more nuanced understanding of the use of written communication. First, I shall evaluate the use of letters for communicating against the use of oral messages for the same purposes; for messages conveyed orally, by means of the voice of a messenger, and information conveyed in writing, by means of a letter, are both instances of mediated, ‘second-hand’ communication.³ Bassi has pointed out that this mediated communication

¹ Among the most important recent studies are the papers in Holzberg 1994, and Rosenmeyer 2001; for epistolary novels, Hodkinson 2007a. For letters in tragedy, see below, ch. 5.

² Rosenmeyer 2001: 45–60; van den Hout 1949; Longo 1978 and 1981; Porciani 1997.

³ Letters (or inscriptions, oracles, etc.) inserted in a narrative may from a formal point of view be considered as ‘speeches’ (even non-vocalized elements such as thoughts or inscriptions, in themselves

(or ‘scripted communication’, as she suggestively chooses to define it) occupies a middle position in the dichotomy between orality and literacy: it is relayed communication, and not face-to-face speech, but as such can take oral or written form. It thus seems worth investigating whether differences linked to the medium are noticeable.⁴ A written message is by definition inscribed on something material (parchment, lead, even someone’s skin) and sent by a sender, A, to a distant addressee, B, through a third person, the messenger; among the speeches appearing in the sources, I shall, therefore, consider only those concerning a situation in which a messenger transmits a message, oral or written, from a character A to a distant addressee B—in short, only what can be strictly defined as ‘mediated communication’.⁵

Second, I shall evaluate how ancient historians employed ‘mediated speech’ (whether oral or written, but with a special focus on letters) against the backdrop of their use of other types of ‘written reported speech’, such as inscriptions or documents: this approach makes it possible to gauge the respective importance of their choices.

Because of the very nature of historical narrative, it is impossible to assume that the decision to present the transmission of information in the oral code (a messenger relating someone else’s words) or in the written code (a letter) rests exclusively with the author, as would be the case with a novelist: such a choice could be due to external, ‘objective’ factors (the historian, in his enquiries, might actually have been told that a letter had been sent, or that a messenger had been entrusted with the delivery of an oral message).

The following enquiry thus unfolds within a terrain marked by the complex interface of historiographical choices and cultural practice. Putting the findings into the larger context of the historian’s work (tracing internal connections in the narrative, for instance) as well as contextualizing the findings within the larger Greek contemporary cultural context may, however, help to assess the balance between the two.

deprived of sound, would have acquired a vocalization in the performance: Bers 1996: 9). Lang 1984: 80–131 includes in her list of Herodotean speeches all voices other than that of the narrator, hence letters too—the difficulty is in distinguishing between ‘speeches’ in *oratio obliqua* and ‘speeches’ related by the narrator (Lang 1984: 90, 155 n. 6 and 131; de Bakker 2007: 6–7). The same difficulty in defining the notion of ‘speech’ explains the discrepancy between the lists of speeches in Thucydides compiled by Jebb 1880 and Blass 1887: 231 (41), Luschnat 1970: 1159–63 (more than 60), and West 1973: 3–15 (141 ‘speeches’, divided into fifty-two speeches in *oratio recta*, eighty-six in *oratio obliqua*, and three combining direct and indirect speech; he also includes the letters).

⁴ Bassi 1998: 9. The transmission of information through spontaneous conveyors, such as travellers, who may accidentally learn of events that they then report to others, is not ‘mediated communication’, since the initiative of the individual, who is responsible for what he chooses to report, is paramount. Cf. Longo 1981: 13–30; Longo 1997: 657–60. On news, see Lewis 1996; Russell 1999. The spontaneous diffusion of news in Herodotus takes varied forms: the λόγος πολλός concerning Solon, his wisdom, and his voyages, which reaches Croesus without any specific intermediaries (1. 30. 2); the φάτις concerning the return of Peisistratus (1. 60. 5) or the birth of Cyrus (1. 122. 3); the ἀγγελίη concerning the victory of Marathon (7. 1. 1; 8. 99. 1); the φήμη of the victory of Plataea, spreading itself miraculously at the moment of Mycale (9. 100). The words of the Pythia ‘arrive’ (τούτοις ἐλθοῦσι τοῖς ἔπει, 1. 56. 1), exactly as the *chresmos* (1. 75. 2) and the *manteion* (2. 111. 3) do; letters too ‘arrive’ (3. 43). Finally, news can be diffused spontaneously by ‘someone’, as in Hdt. 1. 43. 3 or 5. 33. 3.

⁵ Longo 1981: 27. The modalities of mediated communication, oral and written, are discussed in Longo 1981: 43–58 and 59–63. See also Bassi 1998: 43 for a definition of ‘scripted communication’; this corresponds to what de Bakker 2007: 49 terms ‘transported speech’.

4.1. MEDIATED LONG-DISTANCE COMMUNICATION IN HERODOTUS

Looking at the interplay between oral and written messages in Herodotus has implications for the understanding of both the *Histories* as a whole, and the cultural world of fifth-century Greece. Three important features of Herodotus' work that have been recently stressed are the use of prose for his narrative; the consciousness of the peculiar status that being written confers on the work; and the peculiar form taken by the proem (an epistolary proem?).⁶ However, there is no agreement on the implications of the authorial use of expressions such as *τάδε λέγω* and *τάδε γράφω*; more generally, the debate on the level of intentionality of Herodotus' *Schriftlichkeit* is still very open. The analysis of the peculiar characteristics of written and spoken messages in Herodotus may contribute to the ongoing discussion on the shape of the *Histories*.⁷

The wider cultural implications will emerge from the comparison between the Herodotean use, the use in the other historians, and the enunciation of the 'real' letters on lead or on ceramic fragments of the archaic and classical period. If, as I shall suggest, in Herodotus' work there is no formal difference in terminology or enunciation between written and oral messages, then this has implications for identifying the moment when an 'epistolary genre' became codified, and also for the enunciative stance of Herodotus himself.

Let us then see how mediated communication works in Herodotus.⁸ I will not discuss here the mediators themselves. Various types of messenger-characters (*ἄγγελοι, πρέσβεις, κήρυκες*) play a role in the *Histories*, and one might have expected that the form and type of individual messages could be related to the specific type of messenger; but the Herodotean nomenclature for them is not consistent and precise enough to allow a distinction on the basis of the mediator between the different types of diplomatic activities.⁹ We shall thus look at the messages only.

⁶ Choice of prose: Goldhill 2002: 5–6. Writtenness: de Jong 1999, esp. 220–3. On the inscriptional character of the proems of Hecataeus, Herodotus, and Thucydides, Moles 1999; for the notion of an epistolary proem in Hecataeus and Herodotus, Corcella 1996b; Porciani 1997. Degree of 'Schriftlichkeit': contrast the positions of Murray 2001a, Murray 2001b and Slings 2002 with those of Fowler 2001, Rösler 2002.

⁷ See, however, Calame 1995: 12–15 for cautionary words on the danger of considering the enunciative marks embedded in a text as a direct reflection of its situation of communication: 'Semiotically speaking, the utterance of the enunciation creates its own world, just as the story creates its own fiction'.

⁸ For the methodology see Calame 1995: 12–26 and for Herodotus especially 75–96; Darbo-Peschanski 1987: 107–26. See also de Jong 1999 and Dewald 1999 (using a different terminology); and de Bakker 2007: 49–66. I have taken Hude (1927) as the edition of reference for Herodotus; the translations are adapted from Godley (1920–4).

⁹ Gazzano 2002: 24–31; Barrett 2002: 62. Definition of 'messenger characters' and overall description of diplomacy between cities: Longo 1981: 27–42; Piccirilli 2002; Russell 1999: 63–76 (and 143–89 for a sketch of the ways in which various types of messages can be transmitted); older important works on Greek diplomacy include Kienast 1973b and Mosley 1973.

The formal classification proposed by Deffner and further refined by van den Hout will be our point of departure.¹⁰ But while they had limited their scope to messages in *oratio recta*, I have included in my analysis both messages quoted in direct speech and messages reported in indirect speech, for a total of 121 instances of mediated communication, either oral or written;¹¹ 110 passages concern an oral (or presumably oral) transmission of the information, while eleven pertain to the sending of letters; non-verbal communication has not been taken into account. Of course, only mediated communication in *oratio recta* is pertinent to a comparison of the forms of enunciation of written and oral messages; but examining all mediated communication, in *oratio recta* and in *oratio obliqua*, may help define narrative strategies.¹²

In slightly more than half of the corpus, the oral message is reported in indirect speech (forty-three instances of oral message reported by the narrator in indirect speech, and twenty-one in which *oratio obliqua* is mixed with *oratio recta*;¹³ moreover, in seven instances the decision to send a letter is mentioned, with more or less stress, in the narrative, while the content of the message is reported only indirectly). In the remaining examples, the message is given in direct speech (forty-six instances of oral messages and four of letters), following a procedure already attested in the Homeric poems. When compared to archaic Greek epic, however, some important, significant changes in the way the chain of communication is represented are noticeable.

In the *Iliad*, a message is generally repeated twice, the first time when the sender instructs the messenger, and the second time when the messenger transmits it to the addressee. In general, the message is transmitted verbatim or almost verbatim, but each time the deictic markers change to adjust to the situation. Thus for instance in *Il.* 24. 112–16, Zeus speaks to Thetis as follows:

¹⁰ Deffner 1933: 38–40; van den Hout 1949: 30–3. De Bakker 2007: 27–66 offers a nuanced analysis of what he terms ‘transported discourse’.

¹¹ On the importance of taking into account messages in *oratio obliqua* see e.g. Hohti 1976: 7–9. For messages in *oratio recta*, I have tried to achieve completeness; those reported in *oratio obliqua* present an objective margin of arbitrariness (see above on the difficulty of distinguishing between a message reported in *oratio obliqua* and a summary by the narrator)—hence the discrepancy in numbers in respect to de Bakker 2007 (his definition is wider than the one adopted here); but the number of instances is high enough to allow projections. On the characteristics of characters’ speeches and of narrator’s speech in Herodotus see Lang 1984: 90 and especially 132–41; Darbo-Peschanski 1987: 107–26; de Jong 1999: 251–61; as for the characteristics and specific uses of indirect speech in Herodotus, see Heni 1977: 160–2. How to evaluate the alternation between *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua* is a difficult issue: Darbo-Peschanski 1987: 120 and Bers 1996: 270 and n. 6 have suggested that in Herodotus the speeches in *oratio recta* may be even less close to reality than those in *oratio obliqua* (opposite view in Waters 1966).

¹² Narrative of events, reported speech (when the narrator refers what others say), transposed speech (indirect speech purporting to relay the very words of the characters), and mimetic (direct) speech are polyphonically combined in Herodotus’ *Histories* (Darbo-Peschanski 1987: 115–23); this of course applies to most other ancient historians as well.

¹³ Numerous ‘mixed’ instances concern multiple exchanges. It is worth mentioning that out of the about forty-three messages in indirect speech, thirteen concern oracles; out of the twenty-one instances mixing *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua*, fourteen concern oracles, and, in this group, the question is always asked in *oratio obliqua*, while the oracle’s answer, the important part in a consultation, is quoted in *oratio recta*. Cf. Barnabò 1977–8; Darbo-Peschanski 1987: 74–83.

‘go then in all speed to the encampment and give to your son this message (ἐπίτειλον):
| tell him that the gods frown upon him, that beyond all other | immortals I myself am
angered that in his heart’s madness | he holds Hector beside the curved ships and did
not give him | back. Perhaps in fear of me he will give Hector back.’

(Trans. Lattimore)

A few verses later, Thetis transmits the message:

‘But listen hard to me, for I come from Zeus with a message (Διὸς δέ τοι ἄγγελός εἰμι).
| He says that the gods frown upon you, that beyond all other | immortals he himself is
angered that in your heart’s madness | you hold Hector beside the curved ships and
did not redeem him. | Come, then, give him up and accept ransom for the body.’

(Il. 24. 133–7, trans. Lattimore)

While the message is rendered with remarkable fidelity, the adjustments in the deictic markers make it clear that this is Thetis speaking.¹⁴ Thus in both cases (in the instruction speech and in the delivery speech), whoever is talking is in charge. This is obvious for the instruction speech; it might be less so for the delivery speech. In fact, de Jong (1987: 183) stresses that there are ways in which messengers can deliberately alter the message: for instance, by changing the order of presentation when there are various points to be conveyed; by modifying the formulation; by leaving out parts of the message, or conversely by adding some comments of their own; or by changing its mode of presentation from direct to indirect speech. This last strategy allows messengers to introduce the message with a verb of speaking that may convey further information as to the tone of the message, or serve to dissociate themselves from the statement they convey. In the *Iliad*, then, notwithstanding the high level of verbatim repetition of messages, messengers are not simply intermediaries repeating with precision the words of someone else; they also are secondary focalizers, interpreting, selecting, modifying, and organizing the information they must convey.

A very different strategy is adopted in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Here the words of the sender are not expressed; the audience only knows that a messenger is being sent. The first stage in communication between parties, the instruction speech or Coding Time, is thus systematically omitted. The messenger herself conveys the message in direct speech, making it clear that the message comes from someone else (in this case Zeus). Thus, for instance, Iris is sent to fetch Demeter as follows:

First he dispatched golden Iris to fly to and summon his sister, | Fair-haired Demeter
whose form is admired and desired of so many. | Thus her commission (ὦς ἔφαθ’), and
Iris obeyed him. (*Hy. Dem.* 315–17, trans. Hine)

But once she reaches Demeter, she delivers a message from Zeus, in the third person:

¹⁴ Compare *Il.* 24. 113: σκύζεσθαι οἱ εἰπὲ θεοῦς, ἐμὲ δ’ ἔξοχα πάντων with *Il.* 24. 134: σκύζεσθαι σοὶ φησι θεοῦς, ἐε δ’ ἔξοχα πάντων. On messages in the *epos* and on the principle of literal repetition (with adaptation of personal and verbal forms to the new pragmatic situation) see Létoublon 1987; de Jong 1987: 180–5 (note at 181 three instances in which messengers speak apparently on their own initiative), and list of instances at 241–3; on the evolution in the *Odyssey* towards a greater freedom in the repetition of the message between ‘instruction’ and ‘delivery’ speech, de Jong 2002: 82–4; general discussion in Barrett 2002: 56–69; Longo 1981: 46–7; Longo 1997: 661.

‘Demeter, father Zeus, whose thoughts are unwithered and deathless, | Calls you to come to your kind, the gods who are engendered forever. | Go, then, and let not my message (ἔμὸν ἔπος) from heaven remain unaccomplished!’

(*Hy. Dem.* 321–3, trans. Hine)

Thus, there is no mention of the first moment in the chain of communication; however, the messenger’s self-presentation as an intermediary makes it clear that there *was* a chain and that the message originated somewhere else.¹⁵ Richardson (1974: 59 and 262) suggests that the reasons for the omission of the first moment (Zeus’ words) may reside in the characterization of Zeus in the Hymn as a distant, august figure whose remoteness is enhanced by the avoidance of direct speech; the direct speech is delivered by the messenger, with adjusted deictic marks.

A similar omission of the instruction speech is observable in Herodotus: in the *Histories* the message is formulated only once, and not repeated; and it is generally revealed not at the moment in which the addresser confides it to the intermediary, but rather at the moment in which it is transmitted to the addressee. Similarly, the content of a letter is quoted not at the time of composition, but when it is read out or at a point midway between when it was sent and its arrival.¹⁶ However, in Herodotus the omission of the first stage in the transmission of the message (the Coding Time, i.e. the instruction speech) is used to achieve a very different effect from that aimed at in the *Hymn to Demeter*. In a number of instances, the message is given to the recipient without any adjustments in the deictic markers, as if it were declared directly by the originator to the addressee, without the messenger acting as an intermediary.¹⁷ The presence of the messenger is almost suppressed; the effect is that of a face-to-face exchange.

4.1.1. Oral Messages

Deffner, analysing only messages in *oratio recta*, separated the messages in which the sender appeared to speak directly in the first person through the mouth of the messenger from those in which the messenger had a degree of autonomy (i.e. those in which he reported the message by transposing into the third person a text

¹⁵ Richardson 1974: 262; Létoublon 1987: 132–5. Létoublon 1987: 134 presents a scheme of eight possible ways in which the communicative chain may be organized. In theory, a further distinction is possible, between messenger speeches which repeat so closely the words of the sender that the presence of the messenger disappears (first-person reporting), and messenger speeches where the messenger presents himself or herself as an intermediary (third-person reporting). In this sense, the criticism levelled at Létoublon by Bassi 1997: 336 n. 64 is justified, although ultimately unconvincing: Bassi can cite only one example of Iliadic first-person reporting, Agamemnon’s reporting of the Dream, and the text makes it very clear that we have a direct speech inserted inside another speech.

¹⁶ Partial exceptions are Hdt. 1. 53, where the message is summarized in indirect speech by Croesus and repeated in direct speech by the messenger, and Hdt. 8. 114, where the message of the oracle, formulated in indirect speech by the narrator, is transmitted in direct speech by the messenger.

¹⁷ Richardson 1974: 262 notes that the messenger only in rare instances adds his own comments to a message in the epos; yet this happens with *Hy. Dem.* 323 and 467–9 (other instances are *Il.* 2. 33, 8. 423f., *Od.* 5. 100ff.). Cf. the pertinent reflections of Svenbro 1993: 26–7 on ‘what would happen if Agamemnon’s message were to be written’, and more generally his chapter 2 (26–43).

originally formulated in the first person). This distinction was further refined by van den Hout, who arrived at the following scheme:¹⁸

(a) *The sender speaks directly, through the messenger, to the far-away addressee.* From the standpoint of narrative logic, there is a rupture, since the moment of the first encoding of the message (the Coding Time), the time spent in travel by the messenger (in a sense the very presence of the messenger), and the Reception Time coincide, with an effect of deictic simultaneity. This mode of presentation allows the main characters to speak as if they were ‘face to face’, notwithstanding the physical distance. The formal structure of this type of communication is as follows: the narrator announces the sending of a messenger by someone, whose speech is then directly introduced: ‘A, sending a messenger . . . , pronounced the following words: “ . . . ”: (πέμψας κήρυκα/ἄγγελον . . . ἔλεγε τάδε).¹⁹ This introduction by the narrator is followed by direct speech in the first person. The speech may take various forms: (1) it may start *in medias res*, without an introductory formula;²⁰ (2) it may be introduced by a vocative, sometimes preceded by an ‘O’, as in 1. 206. 1, the message of queen Tomyris to Cyrus (πέμψασα ἡ Τόμυρις κήρυκα ἔλεγε τάδε· ὦ βασιλεῦ Μήδων);²¹ (3) it may begin with the formal opening clause: ‘A to B says thus’, as in 3. 122. 3 (Ὀροίτης Πολυκράτει ὦδε λέγει).²² In all three

¹⁸ Deffner 1933: 38–40; van den Hout 1949: 29–31. In what follows van den Hout’s data have been integrated with mine. On forms of address in Greek (but not tied to epistolary communication) see Dickey 1996.

¹⁹ The ellipsis inherent in this structure emerges clearly when there is discrepancy between the number of messengers sent and the *verbum dicendi*, as for instance in Hdt. 9. 18. 3 (πέμψας Μαρδόνιος κήρυκας ἔλεγε τάδε· θαρσέετε, ὦ Φωκῆες), or 8. 28. 1 (οἱ Θεσσαλοὶ πέμψαντες κήρυκα ἠγόρευον τάδε· ὦ Φωκῆες); when a ‘speaking message’ is sent (ἄγγελὸν λέγουσαν τάδε), as in 2. 114. 1 (Thonis to Proteus) or in 3. 122. 3 (Oroetes to Polycrates); or when πέμπειν is used absolutely with a participle of a *verbum dicendi*, as in 4. 80. 2, ἐπεμψε Σιτάλκης παρὰ τὸν Ὀκταμασάδην λέγων τοιαύδε. In Xerxes’ order to insult the Hellespont (7. 35. 2: ἐνέτελλετο δὲ ὦν ῥαπίζοντας λέγειν βάρβαρά τε καὶ ἀτάσθαλα· ὦ πικρὸν ὕδωρ, δεσπότης τοι δίκην ἐπιτιθεῖ . . .) the message is presented as an apposition of βάρβαρά τε καὶ ἀτάσθαλα. In one case only, 9. 98. 2 (Λευτιχίδης ὑπὸ κήρυκος προηγόρευε τοῖσι Ἴωσι λέγων), the use of a herald to express someone else’s words is totally explicit.

²⁰ a1, six instances: 2. 114. 2 and 3 (twice, in the exchange between Thonis and Proteus); 3. 68. 4 and 3. 68. 5 (messages of Otanes to his daughter Phaidyme and her answer, in the context of a very complex exchange, for which see below); 3. 119. 4 (the wife of Intaphernes to Darius, not in this group in van den Hout 1949: 31); 4. 80, Sitalkes to Octamasades. Van den Hout has six instances too, because he discounts 3. 119. 4, but adds 9. 18. 3 (πέμψας Μαρδόνιος κήρυκα ἔλεγε τάδε· θαρσέετε, ὦ Φωκῆες· ἄνδρες γὰρ ἐφάνητε), an instance which I would rather put in group a2, because of the presence, even though in second position, of an apostrophe with vocative.

²¹ a2, sixteen instances, of which five are apostrophes with simple vocative (1. 212, Tomyris to Cyrus; 4. 126, Darius to the king of the Scythians Idanthysus; 6. 97. 2, Datis to the Delians; 9. 60, Pausanias to the Athenians; 9. 98. 3, Leotychidas to the Ionians), while in the remaining eleven the vocative is preceded by ‘o’ (1. 206, Tomyris to Cyrus; 3. 14. 10, Psammenitus’ answer to Cambyses; 3. 69. 2, Otanes to his daughter Phaidyme (not in van den Hout 1949: 31); 3. 119. 3 and 5, Darius to the wife of Intaphernes; 3. 119. 6, answer of Intaphernes’ wife; 4. 127, Idanthysus to Darius’ messenger; 7. 35. 2, words of Xerxes to the Hellespont (not taken into account by van den Hout 1949: 31); 8. 29. 1, the Thessalians to the Phocidians; 9. 18. 3, Mardonius to the Phocidians; 9. 48, Mardonius to the Spartans). Van den Hout 1949: 31 does not consider 7. 35. 2—one might hesitate over its pertinence; forgets(?) 3. 69. 2; and puts in this category 1. 69 (discussed below, with other messages presenting characteristics common to both groups).

²² a3, three instances: 3. 122. 3, Oroetes to Polycrates; 5. 24, Darius to Histiaeus; and 7. 150. 2, message of Xerxes to the Argives (a special case discussed in more detail below, n. 34), with in all

cases, an absent person speaks directly, as is made evident in the third type of opening.

(b) *Alternatively, the messenger may transmit the message in the third person, adjusting the deictic markers.* In this case, the structure used is as follows: ‘A sent messengers, telling them what they should say; and they, once they arrived, said: “A said/says”, followed by one of the following forms: (1) a direct speech in the third person, without any introductory elements,²³ or (2) a speech introduced by a simple vocative (or ‘O’ plus vocative).²⁴ The deictic markers are mainly oriented with reference to the sender, but here too one can notice a tendency to organize the deictic system by taking as temporal *origo* the moment when the delivery starts. A good instance is the consultation of the oracles of Delphi and Amphiar- aus by Croesus:

Τοῖσι δὲ ἄγε μὲλλονσι τῶν Λυδῶν ταῦτα τὰ δῶρα ἐς τὰ ἱρὰ ἐνετέλλετο ὁ Κροῖσος ἐπειρωτῶν τὰ χρηστήρια εἰ στρατεύηται ἐπὶ Πέρσας [Κροῖσος] καὶ εἴ τινα στρατὸν ἀνδρῶν προσθέοιτο φίλον. Ὡς δὲ ἀπικόμενοι ἐς τὰ ἀπεπέμφθησαν οἱ Λυδοὶ ἀνέθεσαν τὰ ἀναθήματα, ἐχρέωντο τοῖσι χρηστηρίοις λέγοντες· Κροῖσος ὁ Λυδῶν τε καὶ ἄλλων ἐθνέων βασιλεὺς, νομίσας τάδε μαντήια εἶναι μούνα ἐν ἀνθρώποισι, ὑμῖν τε ἄξια δῶρα ἔδωκε τῶν ἐξευρημάτων, καὶ νῦν ὑμέας ἐπειρωτᾷ εἰ στρατεύηται ἐπὶ Πέρσας καὶ εἴ τινα στρατὸν ἀνδρῶν προσθέοιτο σύμμαχον. (Hdt. 1. 53. 1–2)

Croesus instructed those of the Lydians who were to bring these gifts to the temples to inquire of the oracles whether he was to send an army against the Persians and whether he was to acquire an army of allies. When the Lydians came to the places where they were sent, they presented the offerings, and inquired of the oracles, in these words: ‘Croesus, king of Lydia and other nations, believing that here are the only true places of divination among men, has endowed you with such gifts as your wisdom deserves, and now he asks you whether he is to send an army against the Persians, and whether he is to add an army of allies.’

The Lydian messengers present thoughts formulated in the past, but with reference to the spatial place of the actual utterance (τὰδε); and then advance a request still formulated by the absent Croesus, but anchored in the here and now.

The formula ‘A to B says thus’ cannot be employed in the opening of this type of message, since besides necessarily implying the absence of the speaking person, it also involves a shift to the first person, which is impossible here, since the

instances a passage to the first person in the rest of the message. Van den Hout counted as instances of this type also 3. 14. 8–9, 8. 140 and 9. 21; but see below.

²³ b1, eight instances: 1. 53, messengers of Croesus consult oracles (not in van den Hout); 3. 21. 1 *bis*, the Ichthyophagi to the king of the Aethiopians, and the king of the Aethiopians to Cambyses; 7. 157, envoys of the Greeks in Syracuse; 8. 75. 2–3 and 110. 2–3, Sicinnus transmitting Themistocles’ message to the Persians and to Xerxes; 8. 142, envoys of Sparta in Athens; 9. 7, envoys of the Athenians, and with them Megarians and Plataeans, ask the help of the Spartans. Van den Hout 1949: 30–1 also cites eight instances, because he puts in this group 3. 119. 4, here assigned to a1 (see n. 20 above).

²⁴ b2, eight instances: 1. 60. 5, messengers of Peisistratos; 5. 98, messenger of Aristagoras to the Paeonians; 6. 105–6, the Athenians to the Spartans; 7. 135–136. 2, the Spartan heralds Sperthias and Boulis in Susa; 7. 172, the Thessalians to the Greek council; 8. 24. 2, herald sent by Xerxes to the Persian fleet; 8. 114, herald sent to Xerxes by the Lacedaemonians; 9. 12. 2, herald of the Argives to Mardonius. Van den Hout 1949: 30–1 had nine, because of his—unjustified—inclusion of 7. 158, Gelon’s answer to the envoys of the Greeks—but Gelon answers without using messengers.

messenger relates the message in his own voice.²⁵ This second category maintains—in fact, enhances—the distance between the sender of the message and the addressee. But there is a remarkable degree of freedom, because the messengers' speech can also include a message of the first type.²⁶ This feature is well exemplified in a message sent by the same Croesus to the Spartans:

ὁ Κροῖσος ἔπεμπε ἐς Σπάρτην ἀγγέλους δῶρά τε φέροντας καὶ δεησομένους συμμαχίης, ἐντειλαμένους τε τὰ λέγειν χρῆν. οἱ δὲ ἔλθόντες ἔλεγον· Ἐπεμψε ἡμέας Κροῖσος ὁ Λυδῶν τε καὶ ἄλλων ἐθνέων βασιλεύς, λέγων τάδε· ὦ Λακεδαιμόνιοι, χρήσαντος τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν Ἕλληνα φίλον προσθέσθαι, ὑμέας γὰρ πυνθάνομαι προεστάναι τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ὑμέας ὦν κατὰ τὸ χρηστήριον προκαλέομαι φίλος τε θέλων γενέσθαι καὶ σύμμαχος ἄνευ τε δόλου καὶ ἀπάτης. Κροῖσος μὲν δὴ ταῦτα δι' ἀγγέλων ἐπεκηρυκέετο (Hdt. 1. 69. 1–2)

Croesus, then, sent messengers to Sparta carrying gifts and asking for an alliance, having instructed them what to say. And they having arrived said: 'Croesus, King of Lydia and other nations, has sent us saying this: "Lacedaemonians, the god has declared that I should make the Greek my friend; now, since I learn that you are the leaders of Hellas, I invite you, as the oracle bids; I should like to be your friend and ally, without deceit or guile."' Croesus proposed this through messengers.

A closer look shows that the distinction between these various modes of communication is not strongly marked. In the first place, often the enunciative typology does not correspond strictly to the way in which the message has been introduced. Thus normally messages of the first type (a) are composed in the first person, since they are supposed to report the very words of the sender. This is always the case of those messages beginning *in medias res* (a1). Similarly, those messages opening with the prescript 'A to B says thus' (a3) regularly make an enunciative shift from the third to the first person. As for the messages opening with an address in the vocative (a2), they are also composed in the first person, whether singular or plural,²⁷ with three interesting exceptions: the words addressed by Xerxes to the Hellespont (7. 35, one of the rare instances in which the content of the message is expressed at the moment of the instruction speech, and not at the time of its delivery), and the two messages sent to Darius by the wife of Intaphernes (3. 119. 3 and 5). In all these instances the intermediaries disappear; the text of the message is, however, given in the third person. The strategy at

²⁵ Van den Hout 1949: 31.

²⁶ Five instances: 1. 69. 1–2, a mixture of b1 and a2 (placed by van den Hout 1949 in a2); 3. 14. 8–9, 7. 150. 2, 8. 140 (discussed below), and 9. 21. 1–2, put by Deffner 1933: 40 in the second (b) category, but considered by van den Hout as an instance of official introductory formula (a3): *προσβαλλούσης ὧν τῆς ἵππου οἱ Μεγαρέες πιεζόμενοι ἔπεμπον ἐπὶ τοὺς στρατηγούς τῶν Ἑλλήνων κήρυκα, ἀπικόμενος δὲ ὁ κήρυξ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἔλεγε τάδε· Μεγαρέες λέγουσι· ἡμεῖς, ἄνδρες σύμμαχοι, οὐ δυνατοὶ εἶμεν τὴν Περσέων ἵππον δέκεσθαι μόνου, ἔχοντες στάσιν ταύτην ἐς τὴν ἔσθλην ἀρχήν· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐς τὸδε λιπαρήν τε καὶ ἀρετὴν ἀντέχομεν καὶ περ πιεζούμενοι· νῦν τε εἰ μὴ τινες ἄλλους πέμψετε διαδόχους τῆς τάξης, ἵστε ἡμέας ἐκλείψοντας τὴν τάξιν· ὁ μὲν δὴ σφί ταῦτα ἀπήγγελλε . . .* This begins as b1, and goes on as a2; the narrative resumes underlining the presence of the herald, as b.

²⁷ A meaningful alternation, as the messages of Tomiris to Cyrus show: the first (1. 206) is in the first person plural, and the queen represents her people; the second (1. 212) is in the first person singular, for the queen has been touched directly in the person of her son.

work in these three passages obtains the result of conveying the impression of a face-to-face conversation, while at the same time stressing the distance between the king and everyone else.²⁸

As for the messages of the second type, in which the messenger seems to have a degree of autonomy, they present a wide range of possibilities. When the message begins *in medias res*, without apostrophe in the vocative, it is generally in the third person. Thus the messages sent by Croesus and Cambyses to Delphi and to the king of the Aethiopians respectively (Hdt. 1. 53, 3. 21. 1); the second half of the answer of the Aethiopians' king to Cambyses (Hdt. 3. 21. 3); and the two messages sent by Themistocles to the Great King through Sicinnus (Hdt. 8. 75. 2–3 and 8. 110. 3).²⁹ A certain number of instances, however, present after an opening in the third person an enunciative shift towards the first person, in general plural; this move is particularly frequent in the case of long messages, comparable to *rheseis*, as in the speech of the envoys of the Greeks in Syracuse, in the one made in Athens by the envoys of the Spartans, and in the one with which the Athenians request a Spartan intervention.³⁰ In these instances the message is attributed by the narrator to a group (*ἄγγελοι*) representing a wider community: the shift has the function of bringing on the scene the voice of the collectivity.³¹

The tendency to move towards an enunciation in the first person is especially strong when the message opens with a vocative, because the apostrophe in this position points to the person speaking. The function and the reasons of this shift may vary; the length of the message also may play a role. The message sent by Aristagoras to the Paeonians, for instance, begins with a sentence (in the first person) in which the messenger appears as an agent of the tyrant; this is followed by a sentence describing the situation in Ionia; the message moves to a smooth

²⁸ Respectively, Hdt. 7. 35: (Xerxes) *ἐνετέλλετο δὲ ὡν ῥαπίζοντας λέγειν* βάρβαρά τε καὶ ἀτάσθαλα· ὦ πικρὸν ὕδωρ, δεσπότης τοι δίκην ἐπιτιθεῖ τήνδε, ὅτι μιν ἡδίκησας οὐδὲν πρὸς ἐκείνου ἄδικον παθόν. καὶ βασιλεὺς μὲν Ξέρξης διαβήσεται σε, ἦν τε σύ γε βούλη ἦν τε μή· σοὶ δὲ κατὰ δίκην ἅρα οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων θύει ὡς ἐόντι καὶ θολερῷ καὶ ἄλμυρῷ ποταμῷ. τήν τε δὴ θάλασσαν ἐνετέλλετο τοῦτοις ζημιῶν. . . 36. καὶ οἱ μὲν ταῦτα ἐποίησαν; Hdt. 3. 119. 3: (Darius) *πέμψας δὲ ἄγγελον ἔλεγε* τάδε· ὦ γύναι, βασιλεὺς τοι Δαρεῖος δίδοι κτλ; and Hdt. 3. 119. 5: *πυθόμενος δὲ Δαρεῖος ταῦτα καὶ θωμάσας τὸν λόγον πέμψας ἡγόρευε*· ὦ γύναι, εἰρωτᾷ σε βασιλεὺς τίνα ἔχουσα γνώμην κτλ.

²⁹ The first three passages present a very spare structure, with name of the sender, verb, and object of the message/request; the other two are construed with the name of the sender, verb of sending (*ἔπεμψε*), name of messenger in the accusative with an agreed participle of a *verbum dicendi*, on which the subordinate depends (*φράσσοντα ὅτι*).

³⁰ Respectively, Hdt. 7. 157 and 8. 142 (*ἔπεμψαν ἡμέας Λακεδαιμόνιοι/Ἀθηναῖοι* + participle coordinated with the accusative—here, *παρὰληφόμενος, δεησομένους*—followed by infinitives); and 9. 7a 1–2, where *ἔπεμψαν ἡμέας Ἀθηναῖοι* introduces a participle referring to the Athenians themselves, followed by *ὅτι* (. . . *ὥς δὲ ἀπίκοντο ἐς τὴν Λακεδαίμονα οἱ ἄγγελοι οἱ ἀπ' Ἀθηνῶν, ἅμα ἀγόμενοι ἔκ τε Μεγάρων ἄγγελους καὶ ἐκ Πλαταιῶν, ἔλεγον* τάδε *ἐπελθόντες ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐφόρους· ἔπεμψαν ἡμέας Ἀθηναῖοι λέγοντες ὅτι* ἡμῖν βασιλεὺς ὁ Μήδων τοῦτο μὲν τὴν χώραν ἀποδίδοι, τοῦτο δὲ συμμάχος ἐθέλει ἐπ' ἴσῃ τε καὶ ὁμοίῃ ποιήσασθαι ἄνευ τε δόλου καὶ ἀπάτης. . . ἡμεῖς δὲ Δία τε Ἑλλήνιον αἰδεσθέντες. . . οὐ κατανέσαμεν ἀλλ' ἀπειπάμεθα). The first person plural reflects the words pronounced by the Athenians when they instructed the messengers. It is interesting that in these situations the instructions are never marked with forms of *ἐντέλλομαι*.

³¹ So also in 7. 172. 2–3: *ἀπικόμενοι δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς τῶν Θεσσαλῶν οἱ ἄγγελοι ἔλεγον*· ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, δεῖ φυλάσσεσθαι τὴν ἑσβολὴν τὴν Ὀλυμπικὴν. . . ἡμεῖς μὲν νυν ἔτοιμοί εἰμεν συμφυλάσσειν, πέμπειν δὲ χρὴ καὶ ὑμέας στρατιὴν πολλήν, ὥς εἰ μὴ πέμψετε, ἐπίστασθε ἡμέας ὁμολογήσειν τῷ Πέρσῃ. . . ἡμεῖς δὲ πειρησόμεθα αὐτοὶ τίνα σωτηρίην μηχανώμενοι. ταῦτα ἔλεγον οἱ Θεσσαλοί.

close with a first person plural that includes the messenger himself in the message.³²

Conversely, in the narrative of the first return of Pisistratus, were it not for the clear statement of the narrator specifying that the messengers are repeating what they have been told to say, the messengers' words might be considered as depending on their initiative.³³ The enunciative position of the messenger and the enunciation of the message itself are thus more complex than would appear at first sight, and convey a number of nuances.

Some flexibility is also occasioned by the contextualization of the message by the narrator. Thus a message sent by Mardonius to the Greek army (9. 48) presents the typical hallmarks of what we have defined as the first group (a2), an apostrophe in the vocative, followed by the first person: Mardonius is here speaking (*πέμψας ὁ Μαρδόνιος κήρυκα ἐς τοὺς Σπαρτιήτας ἔλεγε τάδε· ὦ Λακεδαιμόνιοι...*). However, when the narrative resumes it is focused on the herald, and no longer on Mardonius, bringing about retrospectively a situation close to that of the messages of the second group (9. 49: *ὁ μὲν ταῦτα εἶπας... ἀπαλλάσσετο ὀπίσω, ἀπελθὼν δὲ ἐσήμεινε Μαρδονίῳ τὰ καταλαβόντα*).

Moreover, the two opening formulas may be combined. Thus in the message sent by Xerxes to the Argives (Hdt. 7. 150), the messenger initially appears to be speaking in his own voice (as in group b): he begins by addressing the Argives, with a vocative—but then proceeds to formulate the message in a way strongly reminiscent of the official introductory formula *ὁ δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι τάδε λέγει*.³⁴ The following shift to a first person (plural, to include all Persians, and then singular) makes it clear that the words pronounced are those of Xerxes.³⁵

³² 5. 98: *Ἀρισταγόρης... ἐπεμψε ἐς τὴν Φρυγίην ἄνδρα ἐπὶ τοὺς Παίονας, ... ὃς ἐπειδὴ ἀπύκετο ἐς τοὺς Παίονας ἔλεγε τάδε· ἄνδρες Παίονες, ἐπεμμέ με Ἀρισταγόρης ὁ Μιλήτου τύραννος σωτηρίην ὑποθησόμενον ὑμῖν, ἣν περ βούλεσθε πείθεσθαι. νῦν γὰρ Ἰωνίη πᾶσα ἀπέστηκε ἀπὸ βασιλέως, καὶ ὑμῖν παρέχει σφύζεσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν ὑμετέραν αὐτῶν· μέχρι μὲν θαλάσσης αὐτοῖσι ὑμῖν, τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τούτου ἡμῖν ἤδη μελήσει. Ταῦτα δὲ ἀκούσαντες οἱ Παίονες κτλ.* It may be that from *νῦν* until *μελήσει* the messenger is referring the *ipsissima verba* of Aristagoras; but it is also possible that he remains active, and that the first person plural should be taken to mean 'us Ionians'.

³³ Hdt. 1. 60. 5: Pisistratus and Megacles drive Phye to the city, *προδρόμους κήρυκας προπέμψαντες, οἱ τὰ ἐντεταλμένα ἡγόρευον ἀπικόμενοι ἐς τὸ ἄστυ, λέγοντες τοιάδε· ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, δέκεσθε ἀγαθῷ νόμῳ Πεισίστρατον, τὸν αὐτὴ ἡ Ἀθηναίη τιμῆσασα ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα κατάγει ἐς τὴν ἐωυτῆς ἀκρόπολιν. οἱ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα διαφουιτόντες ἔλεγον κτλ.* The *τοιάδε* here may reflect not uncertainty on Herodotus' part as to what was announced (for if this were the case, we should find *τοιάδε* much more often, where instead we find *τάδε*, see below), but rather the fact that the messengers, speaking independently and autonomously, transmit the message each in his own words. It may be that in an Athenian context messengers have to be presented as independent, even though they are actually not so—there would be irony here on the part of the narrator.

³⁴ Hdt. 7. 150. 1–2: *ἔστι δὲ ἄλλος λόγος λεγόμενος ἀνὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ὡς Ξέρξης ἐπεμψε κήρυκα ἐς Ἄργος πρότερον ἢ περ ὀρμήσαι στρατεύεσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα. ἐλθόντα δὲ τούτων λέγεται εἰπεῖν· ἄνδρες Ἀργεῖοι, βασιλεὺς Ξέρξης τάδε ὑμῖν λέγει· ἡμεῖς νομίζομεν Πέρσῃν εἶναι ἀπ' οὗ ἡμεῖς γεγόναμεν, παῖδα Περσέος τοῦ Δαναΐς, γεγονότα ἐκ τῆς Κηφείας θυγατρὸς Ἀνδρομέδης... ἣν γὰρ ἐμοὶ γένηται κατὰ νόον, οὐδαμῶς μὲν ὑμῶν ἄξω.* Deffner 1933: 40 categorized this within the group b; van den Hout 1949: 31–2 and n. 47 within the group a3. The following narrative does not dissolve the ambiguity.

³⁵ A combination of various elements is also 3. 14. 8–9: *θωμάσας δὲ ὁ Καμβύσης τὰ ποιούμενα πέμψας ἀγγέλων εἰρώτα αὐτὸν λέγων τάδε· δεσπότης σε Καμβύσης, Ψαμμένητε, εἰρωτᾷ δι' ὅ τι δὴ... τὸν δὲ πτωχὸν οὐδὲν σοι προσήκοντα, ὡς ἄλλων πυνθάνεται, ἐτίμησας;* The message begins with a modified version of the official introductory formula; there is, however, no shift from the third to the first person. Van den Hout had classified this as a case of an official introductory formula (a3).

It is appropriate to close this discussion with the most complex instance of the transmission of a message in the *Histories*, the message conveyed by Alexander of Macedon to the Athenians (8. 140–1), meant to transmit a message of Mardonius, in its turn transmitting a message (possibly a letter) from Xerxes.³⁶ Alexander is introduced as the intermediary chosen by Mardonius in 8. 136: the narrator explains the reason for this choice, and then gives a detailed genealogy (8. 137–9), before going back to the message. Thus the status of Alexander as intermediary is highlighted, and he is presented as an independent messenger (8. 140a: *Ἐγγόνει μὲν δὴ ὦδε Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Ἀμύντεω· ὡς δὲ ἀπὶ κετο εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας ἀποπεμφθεὶς ὑπὸ Μαρδονίου, ἔλεγε τάδε*). The words with which Alexander begins his speech, an address to the Athenians, and a formula that introduces the report of someone else (*ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, Μαρδόνιος τάδε λέγει*), appear to confirm this. However, the speech continues with the reporting of Mardonius' own words, in the first person, a shift possibly prepared by the closeness of the opening words to the 'official' introductory formula *ὁ δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι τάδε λέγει*: Mardonius is now directly speaking through Alexander's mouth. He begins by announcing, in the first person, the reception of a message of the King (*ἐμοὶ ἀγγελίη ἦκει παρὰ βασιλέως λέγουσα οὕτως*, whether written or oral is left unspecified);³⁷ the message itself follows, presented in the first person and addressed to Mardonius (*Ἀθηναίοισι τὰς ἀμαρτάδας τὰς ἐς ἐμὲ ἐξ ἐκείνων γενομένης πάσας μετήμι. νῦν τε ὦδε, Μαρδόνιε, ποίει· τοῦτο μὲν τὴν γῆν σφὶ ἀπόδος, τοῦτο δὲ ἄλλην πρὸς ταύτην ἐλέσθων αὐτοί, ἦντινα ἂν ἐθέλωσι, ἔοντες αὐτόνομοι. ἰρά τε πάντα σφὶ, ἦν δὴ βούλωνται γε ἐμοὶ ὁμολογέειν, ἀνόρθωσον, ὅσα ἐγὼ ἐνέπρησα.*) At this point, Mardonius (and Alexander) are simply transparent transmitters of the King's voice; but here the movement backwards begins: Mardonius resumes his own speech, in the position of the independent messenger (*τούτων δὲ ἀπιγμένων ἀναγκαίως ἔχει μοι ποιεῖν ταῦτα, ἦν μὴ τὸ ὑμέτερον αἴτιον γένηται. λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν τάδε...*) Next, Alexander resumes his role of independent actor (*Μαρδόνιος μὲν ταῦτα, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐνετείλατό μοι εἰπεῖν πρὸς ὑμέας. ἐγὼ δὲ περὶ μὲν εἰνότης τῆς πρὸς ὑμέας...*), underlining that what preceded were Mardonius' words, but that he shares his point of view (he himself adduces further arguments in his final peroration). Finally, in 8. 141 the narrative resumes, with *Ἀλέξανδρος μὲν ταῦτα ἔλεξε· Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ πυθόμενοι...* That the character's speech is now over is restated in 8. 142, after a short remark on the behaviour of the Spartans (*ὡς δὲ ἐπαύσατο λέγων Ἀλέξανδρος*).

The encapsulation of three messages into each other causes a projection backwards in time, from the performance time of the speech of Alexander, in which coding time and receiving time coincide (he is speaking directly to the Athenians), to the reported message of Mardonius, whose coding time is once removed, and which enjoys two receiving times, the reception by Alexander some time earlier and that taking place now, and then further back to the message of Xerxes, placed squarely as the origin of everything, and presented, of

³⁶ Asheri 2003: 357–8 stresses 'l'abilità di Erodoto a utilizzare tre stili diversi, in gradazione ascendente...: lo stile autoritario e paratattico del messaggio del Gran Re al suo satrapo, quello più articolato e argomentativo del satrapo e la libera retorica persuasiva del re macedone'.

³⁷ Mardonius' message is for Asheri 2003: 357 a written communication ('il discorso di Alessandro comprende due parti: la lettura del bando di Mardonio... e il commento personale di Alessandro').

course, in the first person. This chain expresses well the complexity, oppressiveness, and ramifications of Persian control, in much the same way as do the descriptions of the Royal road from Sardis to Susa in 5. 52–3, the *angareion* (the race of the Persian messengers through the empire) in 8. 98, and the catalogues interposed at various points in the narrative. At the same time, the fact that each time the message is not ‘digested’ and then presented in the speaker’s own words, but is given in the very words of the sender, enhances the distance—respectful distance, in the case of Mardonius presenting the words of the king; astute distance, in the case of Alexander presenting the words of Mardonius.

The other instances combining direct speech and *oratio obliqua* confirm that it is not possible to confine within a simple scheme the multiplicity of the ways in which information is transmitted in the *Histories*. One point, however, emerges: while oral messages lacking apostrophe or introduced simply with a vocative are pronounced by all sort of characters, the very few oral messages introduced with the ‘official’ formula ‘A to B says thus’ appear only when the person speaking is a non-Greek (whether speaking to another non-Greek or a Greek).

4.1.2. Written Messages (Letters)

How do the composition and transmission of written messages compare to the two main ways of presenting of an oral message? There are eleven explicit references to the sending of written messages in the *Histories*:

1. the letter with which Harpagus exhorts Cyrus to rebellion, inserted in the belly of a hare to avoid interception (Hdt. 1. 123. 3–124);
2. the letter written by Cyrus with which he proclaimed himself *strategos* of the Persians, presented by him to the Persians as if it had been sent by Astyages (Hdt. 1. 125);
3. the long letter sent by Amasis to Polycrates (Hdt. 3. 40), and
4. Polycrates’ answer (Hdt. 3. 42. 4–43. 1);
5. the (false) royal letters read by Bagaeus to Oroetes, leading to the death of the latter (Hdt. 3. 128);
6. the letter of Darius to Megabazus (Hdt. 5. 14);
7. the message tattooed by Histiaeus on the shorn head of a slave, later sent—once the hair had grown back—to Aristagoras to enjoin revolt (Hdt. 5. 35);
8. the letters sent by Histiaeus to the Persians in Sardis, intercepted by Artaphernes, and thus leading to the death of all involved (Hdt. 6. 4);
9. the message inscribed by Demaratus on the wood of a writing tablet, then covered with wax and sent to Sparta, a message that can be deciphered only thanks to the ingenuity of Gorgo (Hdt. 7. 239);
10. the message ostensibly addressed to the Ionians, but catering also for a Persian audience, inscribed by Themistocles on the rocks of Artemision (Hdt. 8. 22);
11. the treasonable exchanges, via letters wrapped around the shaft of an arrow and then covered with feathers, between Timoxenus, the general of the Scioneans, and the Persian general Artabazus during the siege of Potidaea (Hdt. 8. 128).

The message sent by Darius to Histiaeus to bring him back from Myrcinus, in Hdt. 5. 24. 1, is sometimes considered to be a letter, and may have been perceived as one by the audience of the *Histories*—but this is not stated explicitly; the same applies to the message sent by Oroetes to Polycrates (Hdt. 3. 122. 3, discussed below).

Some other instances in which writing is used to register and transmit a message are linked to the consultation of oracles; they also represent a mediated communication, since a message from a god to a mortal is first passed on through the god's servant, then written down by the messengers, and finally brought back to the instigator of the quest. Thus, when Croesus sends messengers to put to the test the oracles of the Greeks (1. 47–48. 1), when the Athenians consult Delphi before Salamis (7. 140–2), and when Mardonius sends Mys the Carian to consult the oracles (8. 135–6. 1), the answer of the god is to be preserved in writing and the person who had initiated the inquiry is presented as reading its results.³⁸ This may reflect actual practice, and may be linked to a sense that the exactness of the words is important (which is an interesting development in itself). The non-verbal messages in the *Histories*, such as the exchange of gifts among the Ichthyophagi and the king of the Aethiopians (Hdt. 3. 20–2), or the gift offered by the Scythians to Darius (4. 131. 4), are also worth mentioning. Inasmuch as the information is transmitted not through words but through objects, these messages are reified, and thus close to written messages; but they differ from them in the same way that they differ from oral messages, because of their symbolic character, susceptible of multiple interpretations and verbalizations.³⁹

If we apply to written messages the same grid used for oral messages, we obtain the following distribution. Two long letters are quoted *in extenso*, making use of direct speech: the letter sent by Harpagus to Cyrus and the letter of Amasis to Polycrates. The first one presents an introductory formula with a vocative (a2), the second one opens with the formal, official introductory formula 'A to B says thus' (a3);⁴⁰ both are written in the first person of the sender (the second letter presents the enunciative shift already discussed from the third to the first person singular), while the recipient is addressed in the second person. Also in *oratio recta* are the two short injunctions of the Great King falsified by Bagaeus, presenting variations on the formal introduction, and in both cases a message in the third person singular,⁴¹ and the address to the Ionians, inscribed by Themistocles on the rocks

³⁸ In writing was also the oracle concerning Delos, 6. 98. 3: καὶ ἐν χρησμῷ ἦν γεγραμμένον περὶ αὐτῆς ὧδε· κινήσω καὶ Δῆλον ἀκινήτόν περ εὐόσαν. On oracular 'speeches' in the *Histories* see de Bakker 2007: 60–3.

³⁹ On non-verbal communication in Herodotus see Lateiner 1987; Gazzano 2002: 50–62.

⁴⁰ Respectively, Hdt. 1. 124 and Hdt. 3. 40. The first letter, comprising fourteen lines of Hude's text, is introduced with τὰ δὲ γράμματα ἔλεγε τάδε, followed by the address Ἰν παῖ Καμβύσῳ, σε κτλ; in it, Harpagus presents to Cyrus their common grievances against Astyages, and explains how Cyrus might easily take power. The second letter—again a long one: approximately fifteen lines of Hude's text—is composed in a moralizing style; it is introduced with γράψας ἐς βυβλίον τάδε ἐπέστειλε ἐς Σάμῳ· «Ἀμασις Πολυκράτει ὧδε λέγει· ἡδὺ κτλ...»). Neither has a formal conclusion.

⁴¹ Hdt. 3. 128. The two letters are mentioned after others whose content is simply summarized; they are introduced by the narrator in a very similar way: διδοὶ ἄλλο (βυβλίον), ἐν τῷ ἐνὶν ἔπεα τάδε· ὦ Πέρσαι, βασιλεὺς Δαρείος ἀπαγορεύει ὑμῖν μὴ δορυφορεῖν Ὀροίτεια (thus a2/a3); and τὸ τελευταῖον τῶν βυβλίων διδοὶ τῷ γραμματιστῇ, ἐν ᾧ ἐγγράπτο· Βασιλεὺς Δαρείος Πέρσῃσι τοῖσι ἐν Σάρδισι ἐντέλλεται κτείνειν Ὀροίτεια (thus a1/a3).

of the Artemision: it opens in the vocative, and is written in the first person plural.⁴² As for the message sent by Histiaeus to Aristagoras to exhort him to rebel, it might appear as the transposition in the narrative of a literal quote in direct speech—but it is just one word, ‘revolt’.⁴³ In the remaining six instances of epistolary communication (Cyrus to himself/the Persians, Polycrates to Amasis, Darius to Megabazus, Histiaeus to the Persians in Sardis, Demaratus to the Spartans, and the exchanges between Timoxenus and Artabazus) the message is summarized, with more or less detail, by the narrator of the *Histories*.⁴⁴

The epistolary messages in *oratio recta* should, as regards their enunciation, correspond to the first category of oral messages, those in which the sender speaks through the mouth of the messenger: both situations offer the greatest promise of fidelity to the words of the sender. This hypothesis is confirmed by the formal analysis: the few epistolary messages of which Herodotus quotes the text are fully comparable to the first category of oral messages, in the sense that they present exactly the same variations of introductory formulas. Thus in the prescript of letters it is possible to find the apostrophe with ω + vocative (Harpagus’ letter, Themistocles’ message to the Ionians); or the more formal δ δείνα τῷ δείνι λέγει (Amasis’ letter); but also a combination of the various possibilities. The royal orders falsified by Bagaeus, opening with a vocative and written in the third person, are directly comparable with the messages of Darius to the wife of Intaphernes (3. 119. 3 and 5) and with Xerxes’ insults to the Hellespont (7. 35). The closeness between the enunciation of letters and that of the first group of messages is enhanced by the fact that often Herodotus uses the metaphor that makes writing speak when inserting in his *Histories* the writing of others, thus rendering these texts effectively close to oral messages.⁴⁵

As for those letters whose content is simply summarized without a break in the diegesis (six instances out of eleven), they also are treated in a way that finds a close parallel in Herodotus’ way of dealing with oral messages: the procedure by which the narrator assumes the function of relating the message is directly

⁴² Hdt. 8. 22: τὰ δὲ γράμματα τάδε ἔλεγε· Ἄνδρες Ἴωνες, οὐ ποιεῖτε δίκαια κτλ... (a2). The speech is all built on the opposition ‘we’/‘you’: it closes with an exhortation to remember that ἀρχήθεν ἡ ἔχθρη πρὸς τὸν βάρβαρον ἀπ’ ὑμέων ἡμῖν γέγονε, ‘in the beginning the quarrel with the barbarian came to us from you’.

⁴³ Hdt. 5. 35. 2–3: the narrator gives the content of the message in indirect speech twice (σημαίνοντα ἀπίστασθαι Ἀρισταγόρην and βουλόμενος τῷ Ἀρισταγόρῃ σημῆναι ἀποστήναι); he then gives the message itself in conclusion: τὰ δὲ στίγματα ἐσήμανε, ὡς καὶ πρότερόν μοι εἴρηται, ἀπόστασιν. The shortness is unsurprising, since the support is a human scalp.

⁴⁴ These are not messages in *oratio obliqua* (transposed speech) but simple narrative (reported speech), and for this reason they are not discussed in Lang 1984 (they correspond to what de Bakker 2007 terms RSA, ‘record of speech act’). On the authenticity of 7. 239 see Corcella 1985.

⁴⁵ See Porciani 1997: 4. This metaphor is also frequently used for inscriptions, cf. 3. 88. 2 (γράμματα λέγοντα τάδε), 4. 91, 7. 228. 1, 8. 22 (discussed above, n. 42); for letters, cf. 1. 124 (above, n. 40). Similarly σημαίνω, with the meaning of ‘signify, allude to, indicate’, is found for both oral and written messages: see Histiaeus’ message, 5. 35 (above, n. 43); the oracle given by Delphi to the Athenians, and transcribed by the ambassadors (theoroi), 8. 142. 2; but also a prodigy, 1. 78. 2. This same indecision between orality and writtenness should then also be assumed for those occurrences, such as at 1. 5. 3, in which σημαίνω is used of the activity of the narrator.

comparable to that by which he summarizes oral messages, or relates them in indirect speech.⁴⁶

The conclusion is evident: from the formal point of view there is no difference between oral and written messages.⁴⁷ The two modes of conveying information are so close that when there are no external elements, it is impossible to decide whether a message such as 3. 122 (Oroetes to Polycrates, discussed below) or 5. 24. 1 (Darius to Histiaeus) is a written or an oral message.

It is, moreover, possible to show that even from the point of view of the effect aimed for, there may be no difference between written technology and oral message. I shall limit myself to one instance only, and compare the stratagem whereby Themistocles tries to push the Ionians in Xerxes' army to rebellion—or at least, to diminish the trust of the Persians in the Ionians—with the proclamation made by Leotychidas just before the battle of Mycale. Herodotus presents the events thus:

Θεμιστοκλῆς ἐπορεύετο περὶ τὰ πότιμα ὕδατα, ἐντάμνων ἐν τοῖσι λίθοισι γράμματα, τὰ Ἴωνες ἐπελθόντες τῇ ὑστεραίῃ ἡμέρῃ ἐπὶ τὸ Ἀρτεμίσιον ἐπελέξαντο. τὰ δὲ γράμματα τάδε ἔλεγε· Ἄνδρες Ἴωνες, οὐ ποιεῖτε δίκαια ἐπὶ τοὺς πατέρας στρατευόμενοι καὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καταδουλοῦμενοι. Ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν πρὸς ἡμέων γίνεσθε· εἰ δὲ ὑμῖν ἔστι τοῦτο μὴ δυνατὸν ποιῆσαι, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου ἡμῖν ἔξεσθε καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ τῶν Καρῶν δέεσθε τὰ αὐτὰ ὑμῖν ποίειν· εἰ δὲ μηδέτερον τούτων οἶόν τε γίνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀναγκαίῃς μέζονος κατέξευχθε ἢ ὥστε ἀπίστασθαι, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ, ἐπεὰν συμμίσγωμεν, ἐθελokaκέετε, μεμνημένοι ὅτι ἀπ' ἡμέων γεγόνατε καὶ ὅτι ἀρχήθεν ἡ ἔχθρη πρὸς τὸν βάρβαρον ἀπ' ὑμέων ἡμῖν γέγονε. (Hdt. 8. 22. 1–2).

Themistocles made his way to the places where drinking water could be found, and engraved on the rocks writing which the Ionians read the next day when they came to Artemisium. This was what the writing said: 'Men of Ionia, you do wrong to fight against the land of your fathers and bring slavery upon Hellas. It would be best for you to join us, but if that is impossible for you, then at least now withdraw from the war yourselves, and entreat the Carians to do the same as you. If neither of these things may be and you are fast bound by such constraint that you cannot rebel, yet we ask you not to use your full strength in the day of battle. Remember that you are our sons and that our quarrel with the barbarian was of your making in the beginning.'⁴⁸

As Herodotus remarks right afterwards, Themistocles had a double intent, to induce the Ionians to change sides and join with the Greeks, or, if the writing were reported to Xerxes, to create mistrust towards the Ionians and keep them out of the sea-fights.⁴⁹ The plurality of addressees of this message, as well as the

⁴⁶ The oral messages in *oratio recta* of the second type (those in which the heralds speak with a voice different from that of the sender) do not find a parallel here. Because the herald speaks with a voice different from that of the sender, the messages cannot be compared to letters; these messages are mediated communication, but not scripted speech.

⁴⁷ So already van den Hout 1949: 23: 'Externally and internally the oldest Greek letter is entirely a verbal message with relation to one subject only'.

⁴⁸ On the stratagem, whose historicity is discussed, see S. West 1985: 285–6, who finds the message far too long for an inscription; Asheri 2003: 223, with bibliography.

⁴⁹ Hdt. 8. 22. 3: Θεμιστοκλῆς δὲ ταῦτα ἔγραψε, δοκέειν ἐμοί, ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρω νοέων, ἵνα ἢ λαθόντα τὰ γράμματα βασιλέα Ἴωνας ποιήσῃ μεταβαλεῖν καὶ γενέσθαι πρὸς ἑωυτῶν, ἢ ἐπειτέ ἀνευχεθῇ καὶ διαβληθῇ πρὸς Ξέρξην, ἀπίστους ποιήσῃ τοὺς Ἴωνας καὶ τῶν ναυμαχιῶν αὐτοὺς ἀπόσχη. Θεμιστοκλῆς μὲν ταῦτα ἐνέγραψε.

anonymity in the text itself of the sender, makes this a peculiar case: the text is entirely construed on the dichotomy 'we'/'you'. One may thus wonder whether 'letter' is the proper term for it. In fact, this text belongs to the communicative mode defined by Longo as 'communication from one to many', whose main vehicles are the oral *κήρυγμα* ('proclamation') and the public inscription.⁵⁰ In this specific case a person, Themistocles, is representing the many, the Athenians and all the Greeks of the Hellenic alliance.

Strikingly, a very similar story, namely, the sending of a message having exactly the same double function of exhorting the Ionians to revolt or of exciting mistrust in the Persians, is narrated in book 9 just before the battle of Mycale; this time, the stratagem is attributed to the Spartan general Leotychidas, who, through a herald, addresses the Ionians, asking them to leave the ranks of the Persians. Leotychidas insists in his message on the fact that the Persians cannot understand him, and closes by encouraging the Ionians to spread the message through word of mouth:

Λευτυχίδης ὑπὸ κήρυκος προηγόρευε τοῖσι Ἴωσι λέγων· ἄνδρες Ἴωνες, ὅσοι ὑμέων τυγχάνουσι ἐπακούοντες, μάθετε τὰ λέγω. πάντως γὰρ οὐδὲν συνήσουσι Πέρσαι τῶν ἐγὼ ὑμῖν ἐντέλλομαι. ἐπεὶ ἀνὰ συμμίσγωμεν, μεμνήσθαι τινα χρή ἐλευθερίας μὲν πάντων πρώτον, μετὰ δὲ τοῦ συνθήματος Ἑβης. καὶ τὰδε ἴστω καὶ ὁ μὴ ἐπακούσας ὑμέων πρὸς τοῦ ἐπακούσαντος. ὧς τὸς δὲ οὗτος ἔων τυγχάνει νόος τοῦ πρήγματος καὶ ὁ Θεμιστοκλέος ὁ ἐπ' Ἀρτεμισίῳ· ἡ γὰρ δὴ λαθόντα τὰ ῥήματα τοὺς βαρβάρους ἐμελλε τοὺς Ἴωνας πείσειν, ἡ ἔπειτε ἀνενεχθέντα ἐς τοὺς βαρβάρους ποιήσειν ἀπίστους τοῖσι Ἑλλήσι. (Hdt. 9. 98. 3–4)

Leotychidas through a herald addressed the Ionians saying: 'Men of Ionia, those of you who hear, understand what I say. For by no means will the Persians understand anything of what I tell you. When we join battle, first of all each man must remember everyone's freedom, and next the battle-cry "Hebe": and let those of you who do not hear me know this from those of you who have heard.' The purpose of this act was the same as Themistocles' purpose at Artemisium; either the message would be unknown to the barbarians and would prevail with the Ionians, or if it were thereafter reported to the barbarians, it would cause them to mistrust their Greek allies.

The remark of the narrator, comparing Leotychidas' proclamation to Themistocles' stratagem at Artemisium, highlights the doubleness of both messages.⁵¹ But even without this explicit signal, the identity in function and closeness in terminology of the two messages is evident, and certainly not accidental. Thus two communicative strategies, both applied in the realm of the 'public', but one relying on (inscriptional) writing, the other on oral announcement, are used for the same purpose in exactly the same way (*λαθόντα τὰ γράμματα/λαθόντα τὰ ῥήματα*).

⁵⁰ Longo 1997: 676–9. Just as writing in Herodotus may be private (the Persian letters) or public (not only this message, but also other inscriptions), so also oral messages may be private or public. A good instance is offered by Themistocles' communications with the Persian generals: eminently private, these negotiations are undertaken orally by a trusted man, Sicinnus (8. 75 and 110), cf. nn. 23 and 29 above.

⁵¹ Hude as well as Flower and Marincola 2002: 273 and 275 consider the remark as Herodotean; Macan 1908: 796–7, How and Wells 1928: ii, 330, and Legrand consider this an ancient gloss. It is true that the Greek is rather problematic. Mistrust of the Ionians there must have been, for as Macan 1908: 796 further remarks, the Persians at Mycale were in a position to dispute a Greek attempt at landing, and their failure to do so is best explained by their mistrust of the Ionians.

Let us close this section by underlining those features that are common to both oral and written messages. Very often messages, both oral and written, are introduced by a cataphoric *τάδε* (*ἔλεγε τάδε*), while the narrative restarts with an anaphoric *ταῦτα*, implying that what has been quoted is the very text of the message. However, some messages, again both oral and written, are introduced by *τοιάδε*, while the narrative, when it resumes, refers back with *τοιαῦτα*. Whatever the importance one may want to attribute to the alternation in the use of these pronouns, it is important to note that in Herodotus they are not distributed according to a written/oral divide.⁵² Moreover, the terminology used is the same: *ἐντέλλομαι* for instance is used both for written and oral messages; five times *ἐπιστέλλω* has the meaning 'to order', twice it means 'to send a letter'. *ἐπιλέγομαι* is used eleven times for 'to read', but in nineteen instances it means 'to think, to ponder', and in five other instances it means 'to choose' (soldiers, or fast ships): its use is clearly not limited to written communication.⁵³ Finally, the introductory formula 'A to B says thus' is used for both oral and written messages; it is moreover exclusively reserved, in both situations, for oriental kings and tyrants.⁵⁴

4.1.3. Herodotean Strategies: Functions and Uses of Epistolary Writing

If oral and written messages are so similar from the point of view of the form, if moreover the same effects can be obtained with the one or the other, is it possible to explain Herodotus' choices? And is it possible in the first place to speak of choices? Is the insertion of letters to be explained as desire for *variatio*? As a consequence of narrative constraints? As a reflection of the traditions received by Herodotus? The two first contexts presenting epistolary exchanges are the story of the ascent of Cyrus to the Persian throne and the narrative of the end of Polycrates. These are the only instances in which the text of a relatively long letter is

⁵² See Gazzano 2002: 20–3 (as well as Lang 1984: 132–3) for a discussion of the use of *τάδε* and *τοιάδε* (and of the alternation between *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua*) in the work of Herodotus: they both conclude that the difference is not significant, and point to the great difference in respect to Thucydidean usage: famously, after having explained himself in 1. 22 on his method in respect to speeches, Thucydides will systematically introduce them with *τοιάδε*. There is, however, consistency in Herodotus' systematic use of *τάδε* to introduce metrical oracles, inscriptions, or quotations from Homer: for these forms of speech, *τοιάδε* (or *τοιόνδε*) is never used (de Bakker 2007: 44).

⁵³ Cf. Powell 1938, s.v.; for *ἐπιλέγομαι* used of letters, see 1. 124. 1 and 125. 2 (in both instances Cyrus sending a letter, *βυβλίον*); 3. 41. 1, 43. 1 (Polycrates and Amasis) and 128. 3 (the *grammatistes* of Oroetes); 5. 14. 2 and 8. 128. 3 (respectively the *βυβλίον* of Darius to Megabazus and that of Artabazus to Timoxenus); 7. 239. 4 (*τὰ γράμματα* of Demaratus). But the term is found also for inscriptions (compare 2. 125. 6, where the verb is used of an Egyptian interpreting for the narrator *τὰ γράμματα*) and for oracles (particularly interesting is 8. 136. 1: *Μαρδόνιος δὲ ἐπιλεξάμενος ὃ τι δὴ λέγοντα ἦν τὰ χρηστήρια*, since these oracles are first transmitted to Mardonius in writing, but then 'speak': *ἐπιλέγομαι* might here have the generic meaning of 'learning').

⁵⁴ I am not implying with this a derivation of the Greek epistolary prescript from a Persian formula; van den Hout 1949: 29–30 and Porciani 1997: 34–6, have rightly rejected the notion of a Persian origin of the Greek epistolary prescript. But Herodotus may have wanted to characterize through the use of this formula the oriental style of communication.

given back integrally; they also prove conclusively that these letters owe their presence in the *Histories* to a decision of the author, linked to specific reasons.

4.1.3.1. *The Place of Letters in the Story of Cyrus' Ascent*

Having related Cyrus' victory over Astyages, Herodotus makes a pause in the narrative of events, introducing a dialogue between victor and loser. Such dialogues are typical of the *Histories*: the best known instance is the one having as protagonists Croesus and Cyrus.⁵⁵ Here, the characters are the defeated king of the Medes, Astyages, and Harpagus, the general who, in order to avenge himself, first sent a letter to Cyrus inciting him to revolt and then convinced the army of the Medes to withdraw. This is what Herodotus has to say:

When Astyages was a captive, Harpagus came and exulted over him and taunted him (κατέχαιρέ τε καὶ κατεκερτόμην), and besides many other bitter words (καὶ ἄλλα λέγων ἐς αὐτὸν θυμαλγέα ἔπεα) he recalled his banquet, when Astyages had fed Harpagus his son's flesh, and asked Astyages what it was like to be a slave after having been a king. [2] Fixing his gaze on him, Astyages asked back whether he considered Cyrus' deed as his own. (ὁ δέ μιν προσιδὼν ἀντείρετο εἰ ἐωυτοῦ ποιέεται τὸ Κύρου ἔργον.) Harpagus answered that he had written, and thus the action rightly was his. (Ἄρπαγος δὲ ἔφη, αὐτὸς γὰρ γράψαι, τὸ πρῆγμα ἐωυτοῦ δὴ δικαίως εἶναι) [3] Then Astyages showed him (with the *logos*) that he was the most foolish and most unjust man of all; most foolish, in giving another the throne which he might have had for himself, if the present business was indeed his doing (Ἀστυάγης δέ μιν ἀπέφαινε τῷ λόγῳ σκαιότατόν τε καὶ ἀδικιώτατον ἔοντα πάντων ἀνθρώπων, σκαιότατον μὲν γε, εἰ παρεὼν αὐτῷ βασιλεία γεινέσθαι, εἰ δὲ δι' ἐωυτοῦ γε ἐπρήχθη τὰ παρεόντα, ἄλλῳ περιέθηκε τὸ κράτος); most unjust, in enslaving the Medes because of that banquet. (Hdt. 1. 129. 1–3)

Harpagus and Astyages refer to events that have already been narrated: Astyages had served to Harpagus his own child as a meal, because Harpagus had failed to kill the new-born Cyrus, the son of Astyages' daughter and a Persian prince. Once Cyrus had been recognized and had been accepted back into his family, Harpagus sent him a letter hidden inside the belly of a hare in order to avoid the message's being intercepted, with the purpose of avenging himself. Herodotus reports the text of this relatively long letter in its entirety: this is rather surprising, both because the content of the letter is fairly straightforward and because elsewhere in the *Histories* letters are summarized. In fact, what is striking about this letter is its mode of conveyance rather than its content. At any rate: Harpagus, having promised his help, convinced the young prince to rebel against Astyages.

The dialogical coda to the narrative of Cyrus' ascent to power is clearly part of an elaborate construction: the dialogue between Harpagus and Astyages is structurally symmetrical to the first dialogue of this same narrative, also taking place between Astyages and Harpagus (1. 108. 4–5 ≈ 1. 129).⁵⁶ This dialogue has the purpose of promoting a reflection on two themes that will be central in the three final books of the *Histories*: the duties of the individual towards his own people,

⁵⁵ Another instance appears at 3. 14. 9–10, the dialogue between Cambyses' messenger and Psammenitus. On the sudden wisdom of defeated kings see the terse comment of Lattimore 1939: 31 'Fallen kings drop their delusions with their power'.

⁵⁶ See Heni 1977: 143 n. 161.

and the consequences that the private affairs of a few individuals may have over the destiny of entire nations.⁵⁷ But the mention of the earlier epistolary exchange gives Herodotus the opening needed to introduce within the context of the traditional opposition of *λόγος* and *ἔργον*, word and action, a third element, writing, here represented by the letter in the hare's belly; the overall purpose of all this is, I suggest, to advance here a first reflection on the purpose of the *Histories* themselves.⁵⁸ Harpagus stresses the primary role of his writing in respect to the *ergon*, the action: it is the fact of having written, and not, for instance, his role in convincing the army of the Medes to withdraw, that allows him to claim Cyrus' victory as his own.⁵⁹ As for the defeated Astyages, he ably uses the *logos* to demonstrate the enormity of Harpagus' error (nor does he seem altogether convinced of the correctness of Harpagus' premise).⁶⁰ The terminology used and the rather complex articulation of the dialogue—related in *oratio obliqua* by the narrator—show that behind this is an Herodotean reflection that goes beyond the problem of the justness of Harpagus' revenge; particularly revealing is the apposition of τῷ λόγῳ to ἀπέφαινε, in itself not strictly necessary, and actually rather difficult to explain.⁶¹ Here, the stress on the *logos* is intended to create a contrast with the written character of Harpagus' action; but why the determinative? It is difficult to interpret this other than as a reference by Astyages to 'his' *logos*, the (written) *logos* composed by Herodotus, in which the story of the fall of

⁵⁷ Von Fritz 1967, i, Text: 290 rightly draws attention to the extremely tight connection between received information and Herodotean reworking in this part of the *Histories*; he also points out where the seams are still visible. For the Herodotean reworking of traditional themes in the context of the story of Astyages see also Pelling 1996; Ceccarelli 2005c; and Murray 2001a [1987]: 38 for the hypothesis of a Median source.

⁵⁸ On the opposition *logos/ergon*, which will be particularly developed by Thucydides, see Parry 1981, and for the earlier period, Heinimann 1945: 43–58; Parry 1981: 15–61 (49–50 on Herodotus). Parry considers that in Herodotus, as in Homer, *logos* and *ergon* are complementary; he mentions as representative of this complementarity Hdt. 5. 24. 1 (in the context of a direct speech: this is the message sent by Darius to Histiaeus): τοῦτο δὲ οὐ λόγοισι ἀλλ' ἔργοισι οἶδα μαθών. Our passage seems to me closer to the Gorgianic notion of the *λόγος* δυναστής, which can accomplish (create) *θειότατα ἔργα* (cf. Parry 1981: 44–5).

⁵⁹ Astyages had initially spoken of *ἔργον*, but Harpagus speaks of *πρήγμα* (a term taken up by Astyages in his final comment, εἰ δὴ δι' ἐωυτοῦ γε ἐπρήχθη τὰ παρόντα). *πρήγμα*, a term with more abstract connotations, is possibly closer to Harpagus' way of seeing things—it also does not have the positive connotations of *ergon*. A similar striking interaction of 'saying', 'writing', and 'action' is in Critias fr. B 5 D.–K. (= Plut. Alc. 33. 1), on the return of Alcibiades: γνώμη δ' ἢ σε κατήγαγ', ἐγὼ ταύτην ἐν ἅπασιν | εἶπον, καὶ γράψας τοῦργον ἔδρασα τόδε. | σφραγίς δ' ἡμετέρης γλώττης ἐπὶ τοῖσδεσι κείται. (Analysis of this passage in Iannucci 1998; Iannucci 2002: 35–77).

⁶⁰ Erbse 1992: 38–9 considers the episode of the letter sent by Harpagus to Cyrus an invention of Herodotus. In this case, the dialogic coda must all the more appear to reflect Herodotean (and not traditional) ideas. A similar constellation is in 4. 36. 2, where the act of *graphein* ('to draw, to write') a geographical map is opposed to its interpretation, in what is clearly a Herodotean comment: γελῶ δὲ ὁρῶν γῆς περιόδους γράψαντας πολλοὺς ἥδη καὶ οὐδένα νόον ἔχόντως ἐξηγησάμενον, οἱ Ὠκεανόν τε βέοντα γράφουσι περίξ τὴν γῆν...

⁶¹ A *verbum demonstrationis* with *λόγῳ* (but always without the article) is also found in 5. 84. 1 (ἀπέφαινον λόγῳ ὡς οὐκ ἀδικοῖεν), in 5. 94. 2 (ἀποδεικνύντες τε λόγῳ), and in 8. 61. 2 (ἐδῆλου λόγῳ); compare moreover 1. 37. 3: λόγῳ ἀνάπεισον. These are all contexts in which there is a dispute among two parties; but in none of these instances is there any connection with writing. The article is, however, present in 2. 18. 1, where the narrator speaks in the first person, and where τῷ λόγῳ clearly refers to Herodotus' own work: μαρτυρεῖ δέ μοι τῇ γνώμῃ, ὅτι τοσαύτη ἐστὶ Αἴγυπτος ὅσην τινὰ ἐγὼ ἀποδείκνυμι τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ τὸ Ἀμμωνος χρηστήριον γενόμενον.

Media is narrated.⁶² It is also remarkable that *καταχαίρω*, the verb with which Herodotus describes Harpagus' behaviour towards Astyages, is used only one more time in the *Histories*, in 7. 239. 2, in a context linked to the sending of secret messages, to connote the possibly negative intentions (Herodotus here hesitates between two versions) of Demaratus' decision to warn the Spartans by means of an engraved wooden tablet covered with wax.⁶³ Finally, the emphasis on a letter as the cause of the ruin of the power of the Medes points back to the determining action of Deioces, the founder of the empire: the refusal of face-to-face communication and the imposition of a filter through the use of writing as the main instrument of communication.⁶⁴ All this shows that, as with Cyrus' stratagem of writing to himself a letter supposedly sent by Astyages in which the latter appears to give him supreme command (a very similar strategy will be deployed in 3. 128. 2–5), the epistolary exchange between Harpagus and Cyrus is an integral part of the Herodotean version of the ascent of Cyrus to the throne, and not just a marginal addition.

4.1.3.2. Polycrates: A Greek Tyrant between Egypt and Persia

The other long letter of the *Histories* (approximately fifteen lines of Hude's text) is the one sent by Amasis to the tyrant of Samos Polycrates. It is likely that Herodotus had a particularly important role in the 'writing' of this letter. Firstly, in this exchange the Egyptian pharaoh assumes the role that had been Solon's in the first book; there is a close link, at the level of both terminology and content, between this part of the *Histories* and the conversation between Croesus and Solon.⁶⁵ Moreover, the sending of letters signposts important articulations of this part of Herodotus' work: letters play a role in the end of Polycrates, and letters will bring about the death of Oroetes.

Polycrates' story opens with a short narrative, meant to illustrate the tyrant's extraordinary good fortune. This fortune preoccupies the pharaoh, who decides to write to Polycrates, to warn him of the envy of the gods. The letter is first

⁶² See Pucci 1993: 13–14 for discussion of a passage (1. 90. 3), in which the verb *ἐπαλλόγησε* in the mouth of a character reflects the retelling of Herodotus' own story, with an effect of *mise en abyme*.

⁶³ On the primary sense of *χαίρειν* (to rejoice over the offer of a sacrifice: rather appropriate in both cases) see 55–6 and 90–8 above; Wachter 1998; Day 2010: 234–54.

⁶⁴ The story of Deioces is told at Hdt. 1. 95–101 (for his introduction of messengers and writing see Hdt. 1. 99–100, and above, 88–9). On the despotic character of Deioces' writing see Steiner 1994: 130–2, who moreover stresses the exemplary character of this narrative, the first one to thematize the conquest of absolute power over an entire people by an individual; Ceccarelli 2002. Von Fritz 1967: 282 remarks that Deioces' desire for power is expressed through the Greek term *tyrannis*.

⁶⁵ For Heni 1977: 65 and n. 208 the letter is a typically Herodotean instrument, and does not come from the tradition to which Herodotus owes the more ancient story of the ring. Amasis' words in 3. 40. 2: *ἐπισταμένῳ τὸ θεῖον ὥς ἔστι φθονερὸν* can be directly compared to Solon's in 1. 32. 1: *ἐπιστάμενον με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐν φθονερὸν τε καὶ παραχῶδες*; in both cases this opens the discussion, giving the grounds for the warning. *Αἰών* and *πρόρριζος*, used infrequently by Herodotus and exclusively in direct speech (here respectively in 40. 2 and 40. 3), appear also in the *logos* of Croesus (respectively in 1. 32. 5 and 1. 32. 9). *αἰών* appears also in 7. 46. 4 (words of Artabanus, where also *φθονερός* is referred to the god), and in the words of the commanders of Phocéans and Athenians in 9. 17. 4 and 27. 3; *πρόρριζος* appears in the speech with which Leotyichidas retells the story of Glaucus, in 6. 86d (another character ruined by his avidity and desire for riches; see Nenci 1998: 248–50).

introduced by the narrator; it opens with a formal prescript in the third person, and then continues in the first person:

γράφας ἐς βυβλίον τάδε ἐπέστειλε ἐς Σάμον· Ἀμασις Πολυκράτει ὡδε λέγει· ἡδὺ μὲν πυνθάνεσθαι ἄνδρα φίλον καὶ ξεῖνον εὖ πρήσσοντα, ἐμοὶ δὲ αἱ σαὶ μεγάλοι εὐτυχίαι οὐκ ἀρέσκουσι... (Hdt. 3. 40. 1–2)

Having written these thoughts in a letter he sent it to Samos: 'Amasis to Polycrates thus speaks. [2] It is pleasant to learn that a friend and ally is doing well. But I do not like these great successes of yours...'

The letter ends abruptly, without any final wishes; the narrative goes on with

ταῦτα ἐπιλεξάμενος ὁ Πολυκράτης καὶ νόῳ λαβὼν ὥς οἱ εὖ ὑπετίθετο ὁ Ἀμασις... (Hdt. 3. 41. 1)

Polycrates, reading this and understanding that Amasis' advice was good...

The physical time needed for the message to be brought to Samos and delivered to the tyrant disappears here completely: τάδε, the cataphoric deictic referring to the content of the letter, corresponds to the ταῦτα that, when the diegesis resumes, refers back to the content of the letter, but this time from the point of view of Polycrates and not Amasis. The letter is clearly a substitute, an expedient to replace a conversation that is made impossible by the distance between the two protagonists.

The tyrant follows the pharaoh's counsel, throws a ring in the sea, but miraculously finds it again.

Polycrates saw the hand of heaven in this matter; he wrote a letter and sent it to Egypt, telling all that he had done, and what had happened to him (τὸν δὲ ὡς ἐσῆλθε θείον εἶναι τὸ πρήγμα, γράφει ἐς βυβλίον πάντα τὰ ποιήσαντά μιν οἷα καταλελάβηκε, γράφας δὲ ἐς Αἴγυπτον ἐπέθηκε).⁶⁶ When Amasis read Polycrates' letter (ἐπιλεξάμενος δὲ ὁ Ἀμασις τὸ βυβλίον τὸ παρὰ τοῦ Πολυκράτους ἦκον), he perceived that no man could save another from his destiny, and that Polycrates, being so continually fortunate that he even found what he cast away, must come to an evil end. [2] So he sent a herald to Samos to renounce his friendship. (πέμψας δὲ οἱ κήρυκα ἐς Σάμον διαλύεσθαι ἔφη τὴν ξεινίην) (Hdt. 3. 42. 4–43. 2)

The conclusion of this part of the story shows that the epistolary exchange is reserved for private affairs; when it becomes necessary to break a friendship, Amasis sends a herald.⁶⁷ The peculiarity of the Herodotean narrative emerges vividly when compared with the way in which Diodorus Siculus (writing in the first century BC) relates the events. In Diodorus, Polycrates behaves unjustly and violently (*βιαίως*); for this reason, Amasis sends him envoys (*πρεσβευταί*), to convince him to mend his ways. But Polycrates persists, and as a result the

⁶⁶ The content of this second letter is not given: the repetition would have been pointless. Moreover, in this way the contrast between Amasis and Polycrates is stressed: as pointed out by Heni 1977: 68, while Amasis has the ability to interpret events, seeing them in the larger context, Polycrates can only tell what happens to him.

⁶⁷ Whose personality is absorbed into the personality of the pharaoh, according to one of the possible modalities for the transmission of oral messages (here, however, the exchange is summarized by the narrator).

pharaoh denounces the friendship through a letter.⁶⁸ The distribution of oral and written messages is the exact opposite of what we find in Herodotus; it corresponds well to the changed diplomatic habits of Diodorus' times.

Polycrates' downfall, already announced in the letter sent by the tyrant to Amasis, is brought about by the satrap of Sardis Oroetes.⁶⁹ This part of the story too involves heralds and exchanges of messages: according to one of the versions related by Herodotus, one of the reasons for Oroetes' hatred of Polycrates was the lack of respect shown by the tyrant towards a messenger of the satrap—and thus towards the satrap himself;⁷⁰ moreover, the immediate cause of Polycrates' ruin is a deceitful message sent by Oroetes to Polycrates (3. 122. 3–4)—it is unclear whether written or oral. The text is as follows:

ὁ δὲ ὦν Ὀροίτης ἰζόμενος ἐν Μαγνησίῃ τῇ ὑπὲρ Μαϊάνδρου ποταμοῦ οἰκημένη ἔπεμπε Μύρσον τὸν Γύγεω ἄνδρα Λυδὸν ἐς Σάμον ἀγγελίην φέροντα, μαθὼν τοῦ Πολυκράτους τὸν νόον . . . μαθὼν ὦν ταῦτά μιν διανοούμενον ὁ Ὀροίτης πέμψας ἀγγελίην ἔλεγε τάδε· Ὀροίτης Πολυκράτει ὧδε λέγει. πυνθάνομαί σε ἐπιβουλεύειν μὲν πρήγμασι μεγάλοισι, χρήματα δέ τοι οὐκ εἶναι κατὰ τὰ φρονήματα. σύ νυν ὧδε ποιήσας ὀρθώσεις μὲν σεωντόν, σώσεις δέ καὶ ἐμέ· ἐμοὶ γὰρ βασιλεὺς Καμβύσης ἐπιβουλεύει θάνατον καὶ μοι τοῦτο ἐξαγγέλλεται σαφηνέως. σύ νυν ἐμὲ ἐκκομίσας αὐτὸν καὶ χρήματα, τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν αὐτὸς ἔχε, τὰ δὲ ἐμὲ ἔα ἔχειν· εἵνεκέν τε χρημάτων ἄρξεις τῆς ἀπάσης Ἑλλάδος. εἰ δέ μοι ἀπιστεῖς τὰ περὶ τῶν χρημάτων, πέμψον ὅστις τοι πιστότατος τυγχάνει ἐὼν, τῷ ἐγὼ ἀποδέξω. (Hdt. 3. 122. 1–4)

Oroetes, then at Magnesia which is above the river Maeander, sent Myrsus son of Gyges, a Lydian, with a message to Samos, having learned Polycrates' intention . . . Learning then that he had this intention, Oroetes sent him this message: 'Oroetes to Polycrates thus speaks: I find that you aim at great things, but that you have not sufficient riches for your purpose. Do then as I direct, and you yourself will succeed and will save me. King Cambyses aims at my death; of this I have clear intelligence. Now if you will transport me and my riches, you may take some yourself and let me keep the rest; thus you shall have wealth enough to rule all Hellas. If you mistrust what I tell you about the riches, send someone who is most trusted by you and I will prove it to him.'

A messenger, Myrsus son of Gyges, is sent to Samos to hand over the message—but the term used, *ἀγγελίῃ*, here and two sentences later, can be used indifferently for oral or written messages; the messenger is then subsumed in the personality of the sender, as in the messages of the first type.⁷¹ The message itself is comparable

⁶⁸ D. S. 1. 95: because Polycrates behaved violently and unjustly, τὸ μὲν πρῶτον λέγεται πρεσβευτὰς ἀποστέλλαντα παρακαλεῖν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὴν μετριότητα· οὐ προσέχοντος δ' αὐτοῦ τοῖς λόγοις *ἐπιστολὴν γράψαι* τὴν φιλίαν καὶ τὴν ξενίαν τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν διαλυόμενον. Cf. Heni 1977: 61 ff., 76 ff.

⁶⁹ The exchange between Amasis and Polycrates makes sense only in connection with the end of Polycrates (and Oroetes later): if this is not (yet) an epistolary novel, the action definitely revolves around letters.

⁷⁰ Hdt. 3. 121. 1–2: according to a minority of informants, Polycrates was lying with Anacreon, turned towards the wall; when the envoy of the satrap arrived, he did not turn himself towards the envoy, nor deigned to give him an answer. The other version (for both we have to be content, in terms of source-indication, with a *λέγουσι*) sees the reason for Oroetes' hatred in the insults addressed by another Persian to Oroetes because of Polycrates.

⁷¹ Rosén 1987 (followed by Medaglia, in Asheri and Medaglia 1990) prints *πέμψας ἐσαγγελίην* at 3. 122. 3, on the basis of the codex D and of a comparison with 3. 84. 2, where an *ἐσαγγελεὺς* is mentioned; I prefer to follow Hude and Legrand. *ἀγγελίῃ* may refer to a written message, a letter,

to other Herodotean letters: a prescript of the formal type, followed by a first person singular, and no greeting formula. The reaction of Polycrates to the message (*ταῦτα ἀκούσας Πολυκράτης ἤσθη τε καὶ ἐβούλετο*, ‘Hearing this, Polycrates was pleased and accepted’) does not allow a decision, because *ἀκούω* is of course used for oral messages, but also for a written one in 1. 125. 1, where the verb describes the reaction of Cyrus at the arrival of Amasis’ letter. Asheri considers this message an epistle—of course, an invented one, be it by Herodotus or by an earlier tradition; van den Hout, and with him the majority of scholars, prefer to see in it an oral message.⁷² The anecdote about the beginnings of Oroetes’ hatred for Polycrates, relating it to Polycrates’ offensive behaviour in the context of the transmission of an oral message, may well have influenced the reading of this message as oral too. But Asheri’s position on the whole allows a richer understanding of the story of Polycrates, highlighting the inverted parallelism between the letter of Amasis and the message of Oroetes (the first aiming at convincing Polycrates that he should deprive himself of something precious, the other stimulating Polycrates’ greed so as to bring about his downfall). At any rate the message, written or oral, marks the end of Polycrates, who falls for the trap of the satrap and, blinded by his desire to acquire riches, goes to Sardis.

Appropriately, letters play an important role in the story of the fall of Oroetes. The connection between these two events (the end of Polycrates and that of Oroetes) is made explicit by the narrator in two statements, strategically located at the beginning and at the end of his account of the end of Oroetes: ‘But not long after, atonement for Polycrates overtook Oroetes’, and ‘Thus atonement for Polycrates the Samian overtook Oroetes the Persian.’⁷³ This is an authorial interpretation; the narrator is, however, also aware (and makes his readers aware) of motivations specific to the Persian world. Among these, pride of place is given to the murder by Oroetes of a messenger sent by Darius, who had brought him unpleasant news: again a communication problem, and one that creates a further parallel between the end of Polycrates and that of Oroetes—disregard for a messenger had been mentioned by the narrator as one of the reasons of Oroetes’ hatred. In both instances, we should not take these remarks as marginal side issues: there, the narrator had taken pains to report the opinion of a minority; here, the killing of one or more royal messengers is mentioned twice, once in the singular, as one of the crimes listed by the narrator in 3. 126. 2, and once again,

especially in those cases where one finds the *iunctura* ἀγγελίη λέγουσα οὕτω, as in 8. 140 (cf. above 112), in 3. 69. 1 (Otanés and his daughter Phaidime), and 2. 114. 1 (Thonis sending to Proteus an ἀγγελίην λέγουσαν τάδε). Only in one instance is it possible, however, to be certain of this—the message sent by Darius to Megabazus, Hdt. 5. 14. 2 (*αὐτίκα δὲ ἵππεὺς ἔθεε φέρων τὴν ἀγγελίην ἐπὶ τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον, περαιωθεὶς δὲ διδοί τὸ βυβλίον τῷ Μεγαβάζῳ*)—because the written character of the ἀγγελίη is proved by the use of βυβλίον (and of γράμματα a few lines earlier, at 5. 14. 1) for this same message. In many other cases it is clear that ἀγγελίαι are oral messages, often simple voices.

⁷² Asheri 1990: 338; van den Hout 1949. Heni 1977: 71 n. 240, in discussing this message, which he considers to be oral, remarks: ‘Ein Unterschied zwischen dem Stil des Briefs und der Botschaft kennt Herodot wohl noch nicht’. See the discussion above.

⁷³ 3. 126. 1: *χρόνω δὲ οὐ πολλῷ ὕστερον καὶ Ὀροίτεια Πολυκράτους τίσις μετῆλθον*, cf. 128. 5: *οὕτω δὲ Ὀροίτεια τὸν Πέρσῃν Πολυκράτους τοῦ Σαμίου τίσις μετῆλθον*. That this remarkable narrative unity is due to Herodotus’ art is beyond discussion—Jacoby 1913: 488 speaks of ‘Kunst der Zusammensetzung’.

this time in the plural—as if by then killing royal messengers had become a habit of Oroetes’—by Darius himself when he lists (in direct speech, addressing the other Persians) his grievances against the satrap (3. 127. 3).

For all these reasons, Darius’ decision to get rid of the powerful satrap of Sardis does not come as a surprise. Bagaeus is the man designed by lot to accomplish the mission—and he will acquit himself of it through letters.

Bagaeus, having drawn the lot, did as follows: having written many letters concerning many things he put the seal of Darius on them (*βυβλία γραψάμενος πολλὰ καὶ περὶ πολλῶν ἔχοντα πρηγμάτων σφρηγιδά σφι ἐπέβαλε τὴν Δαρείου*), and then went with them to Sardis. [3] When he got there and came into Oroetes’ presence, he took out each letter in turn and gave it to one of the royal scribes to read—all the governors of the King have scribes (*ἀπικόμενος δὲ καὶ Ὀροίτεω ἐς ὧν ἐλθὼν τῶν βυβλίων ἐν ἑκάστον περιαιρούμενος ἐδίδου τῷ γραμματιστῇ τῷ βασιλῆϊ ἐπιλέγεσθαι—γραμματιστὰς δὲ βασιλῆϊους οἱ πάντες ὑπαρχοὶ ἔχουσι*); Bagaeus gave the letters (*βυβλία*) to test the spearmen as to whether they would consent to revolt against Oroetes. [4] Seeing that they were greatly affected by the rolls and yet more by what was written in them, he gave another, in which were these words: ‘Persians! King Darius forbids you to be Oroetes’ guard.’ (*ὁρέων δὲ σφας τὰ τε βυβλία σεβομένους μεγάλως καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα ἐκ τῶν βυβλίων ἔτι μεζόνως, διδοὶ ἄλλο ἐν τῷ ἐνὴν ἔπεα τάδε· ὦ Πέρσαι, βασιλεὺς Δαρείος ἀπαγορεύει ὑμῖν μὴ δορυφορεῖν Ὀροίτεα.*) Hearing this, they lowered their spears for him. [5] When Bagaeus saw that they obeyed the letter so far, he was encouraged and gave the last roll to the scribe, in which was written: ‘King Darius instructs the Persians in Sardis to kill Oroetes’ (*ιδὼν δὲ τοῦτό σφας ὁ Βαγαῖος πειθομένους τῷ βυβλίῳ, ἐνθαῦτα δὴ θαρσῆσας τὸ τελευταῖον τῶν βυβλίων διδοὶ τῷ γραμματιστῇ, ἐν ᾧ ἐγγράπτο· Βασιλεὺς Δαρείος Πέρσησι τοῖσι ἐν Σάρδισι ἐντέλλεται κτείνειν Ὀροίτεα*). Hearing this the spearmen drew their scimitars and killed him at once. Thus atonement for Polycrates the Samian overtook Oroetes the Persian.

(Hdt. 3. 128. 2–5)

This story attests to the enormous power of the king’s writing in Persia; it also illustrates the way in which the King’s written decisions were proclaimed. It is now possible to better understand the motivation of Cyrus’ decision to read in front of the Persian army a (false) letter from Astyages containing his nomination as a general (Hdt. 1. 125. 2). This power derives from the complete homology between King’s words and King’s writing: the guards show religious respect for the rolls, and even more for what is written in them, for these are the very words of the king (*ἔπεα τάδε*; the apostrophe in the vocative points in the same direction, conveying the feeling that the King is speaking through the roll) brought to the knowledge of the people through the use of a staging specific to their diffusion.⁷⁴ The power of writing is also made clear by the power attributed to the *grammatistes*, the secretary: this scene presupposes that the only person having the right (and the ability?) to read the King’s letter is the secretary. If *grammatistai* were nominated and attached to the satraps by the kings, then the royal administration had in them a powerful means of controlling the activities of the satraps.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ For a fascinating contrastive account of the interplay between the written text and its authoritative oral (or written) diffusion within the Persian empire and in the world of the Greek poleis see Bertrand 1999: 96–106.

⁷⁵ See on the Persian royal messengers Briant 1996: 354–7 and 382–4. Secretaries are mentioned also in Hdt. 7. 100. 1 (the *γραμματισταί* at Doriscus note the answers given to Xerxes by the various

4.1.3.3. Letters and Narrative Structure

The detailed analysis of these two epistolary exchanges has shown why, in these instances, communication through letters rather than oral messages is chosen. In the narrative of Cyrus' ascent to power, the use of writing for communication had first marked the beginning of the Median kingdom, with Deioces; it also marks, with Harpagus' letter, its end. Cyrus demonstrates his ability to exploit this instrument with the fabrication of a false letter that will give him royal power: he is well equipped to supplant the Medes. The more complex sequence of events narrated in the third book helps give precision to the connotations of epistolary communication. Amasis' warning could certainly also have been given in the course of a conversation, such as the one between Solon and Croesus; a 'wise adviser' was anyway needed to introduce the story of the ring. But a meeting between Amasis and Polycrates could have been dramatized only at the cost of a number of implausibilities; a letter was an ideal solution, a solution moreover that allowed the construction of a tissue of letters around Polycrates' story. The exchange between the tyrant and the pharaoh prepares for the exchange between Oroetes and Polycrates, and the death of Polycrates—lured by an untrue message—parallels that of Oroetes—destroyed by the power of the King's writing and by his disrespect for royal messengers. The stress on writing in this part of the Samian *logos* further prepares the reader for the role that will be played by Maeandrius, the 'scribe' (γραμματιστής) of Samos, whose exemplary role of 'master of writing' between tyranny and democracy has been well described by Detienne.⁷⁶ It is worthwhile pointing out that Maeandrius himself plays a role in the death of Polycrates: it is he who is sent by the tyrant to check that the riches promised by Oroetes do indeed exist; it is he, a 'master of writing', who falls for the satrap's trick of covering eight coffers full of stones with a thin layer of gold (Hdt. 3. 123. 1–2).

4.1.4. Connotations of Letter Writing

The two aspects of Herodotean letters most often highlighted are their relatively extraordinary character, and their oriental, tyrannical connotations. To begin with the first point: the majority of written messages are composed or sent in

contingents of the army) and 8. 90. 4 (γραμματισταί accompany Xerxes in Greece; at Salamis, they assist to the battle and take note of the name, the patronymic, and the city of origin of those trierarchs who distinguish themselves in the battle). The title of φοινικιστής βασιλείος in Xenophon (*Anab.* 1. 2. 20) probably refers to one of these functionaries.

⁷⁶ Detienne 1988b: 73–81. Herodotus (3. 142–3) narrates how Maeandrius first attempts (publicly) to restore freedom to the Samians, judging that Polycrates had been wrong in acting as master of men 'not inferior to himself' (δεσπόζων ἀνδρῶν ὁμοίων ἑωυτῷ), but then, when forced to give accounts, retires to the acropolis, 'sends for each man separately' (μεταπεμπόμενος ἕνα ἕκαστον) as if he were to render his accounts individually, and throws them all in bonds. The story presents numerous elements in common with that of Deioces (analysed above, 89): cf. Steiner 1994: 173–4; Bertrand 1999: 93–5.

exceptional, rather adventurous, circumstances.⁷⁷ The letters of Harpagus, of Histiaeus, of Demaratus, and of Timoxenus are secret messages, inscribed on unconventional materials (the head of a slave, the wood of a waxed writing tablet) or conveyed to their addressees through stratagems (the belly of a hare, an arrow).⁷⁸ Cyrus writes himself a false letter; just as false are the letters read on the orders of Bagaeus in front of Oroetes. The message addressed by Themistocles to the Ionians has a double purpose, and occupies pride of place in a gallery of astute stratagems. These stories, if they were traditional, would have been deemed by Herodotus worthy of preservation and insertion in the *Histories* because they are good stories, indeed, extraordinary and fascinating ones—and of course it is no surprise that they should be part of narratives of deceit, since the overall frame is that of a great war, and, as pointed out by Rosenmeyer, ‘political and military contexts invite the use and abuse of letters in precisely this way’.⁷⁹ As for Cyrus, we know that Herodotus made a choice, because he tells us himself that the story of Cyrus’ rise to power could have been told in three other different ways; evidently the one he chose appealed to him because it allowed him to construe a coherent and significant ensemble—and attention to communication is an important part of this construction. Similarly, the decision to bestow attention on the otherwise extremely short message sent by Histiaeus—a message that could have been conveyed orally (are we to believe that the man remained unaware of the import of the text tattooed on his head?)—is probably because this way of conveying a message is squarely located at the intersection of writing and mutilation, showing how tyrannical uses of writing may enter the Greek world.⁸⁰

There are, however, a few epistolary exchanges that lack connotations of duplicity and astuteness: that between Amasis and Polycrates, and Darius’ letter to Megabazus. The latter represents the ‘zero degree’ of epistolary writing, Persian normality, and as such may have been part of a tradition received unproblematically by Herodotus, or may have been his interpretation of how things would have happened, on the basis of his knowledge of Persian affairs.

In general, the decision to insert in the *Histories* a number of written messages may be explained by the relatively exceptional aspect of epistolary communication in the Greek world and by Herodotus’ own strong interest in communicative processes and their manipulation, evidenced not only by the instances of written and oral communication discussed, but also, for example, by his description of the Persian royal road (5. 52–3) and the Persian messenger system (8. 98), and

⁷⁷ Harris 1989: 88–9; Lewis 1996: 143–8; Rosenmeyer 2001: 45–55. More general discussion of the manipulation of signs in Herodotus in Hollmann 2005, with ample bibliography.

⁷⁸ For this reason they have all been suspected of being ‘inventions’ by Fehling (1981: 198). Of course, no one thinks that Herodotus saw any of these letters, nor that the texts of the (Herodotean) messages correspond exactly to whatever may have been sent—this applies in exactly the same way to oral messages. However, Herodotus may have relied on traditions whose preservation (or indeed invention) may have been due to the extraordinary character of the event narrated.

⁷⁹ Rosenmeyer 2001: 47. For the use of letters in war see e.g. Polyaeus 4. 2. 8 (Philip II of Macedon), 4. 3. 19 (Alexander), 4. 11. 2 and 4. 11. 3 (Cassander).

⁸⁰ On this, Steiner 1994: 154–9; Munson 2007: 165–7. Entrance of tyrannical writing into the Greek world: e.g. the tattooing, on the orders of Pericles, of the surviving Samians after their revolt, Duris *FGrH/BNJ* 76 F 66 and Plut. *Per.* 26. 4, with Ar. fr. 71 K.–A (but see below, 240 n. 190, for doubts on the story).

conversely by his narratives of the deaths of messengers, such as are recounted in the story of the wrath of Talthybius (7. 133–7).

The oriental connotation of letter writing in Herodotus has also attracted attention. Out of the eleven instances of epistolary exchanges in the *Histories* none reflect *intra*-Greek exchanges. The ‘open letter’ of Themistocles to the Ionians is addressed by a Greek to Greeks—but Themistocles has in mind also other readers, the Persians; similarly, if Demaratus has to send a letter to the Lacedaemonians (and a peculiar one, cunningly inscribed below the waxed writing surface, a message that only a woman will be able to decipher), it is because he is at the moment in Susa with the Great King. It may not be an accident that the only two Greeks writing letters to Greeks, Themistocles and Demaratus, operate in their letter writing (and at least in the case of Themistocles also in other matters) with cunning and trickery; and just as Demaratus has found an asylum in Persia, so will Themistocles.

Four other letters, those of Harpagus and Cyrus, that of Bagaeus, and the letter of Darius to Megabazus, concern Persians only, while two testify to exchanges between Greeks and Persians (the letters of Histiaeus to the Persians in Sardis, and the correspondence exchanged between Timoxenus and Artabazus in the course of the Persian siege of Potidaea). The remaining epistolary messages are the letters exchanged between Amasis and Polycrates, an Egyptian pharaoh and a tyrant; and the word ‘apostasis’ tattooed on a head and sent by Histiaeus, a tyrant owing his tyranny to Persia, to Aristagoras, another tyrant. Thus the fact of sending written messages appears indeed characteristic of an oriental and/or despotic milieu.⁸¹ A comparison with the distribution of oral messages confirms this slant: Herodotean character-speeches appear divided almost equally between Greeks and non-Greeks;⁸² as we have just seen, this is emphatically not the case with written messages. The latter are in Herodotus clearly marked as the chosen means of communication between the Great King and his satraps.⁸³

It is, however, necessary to qualify on at least two counts these statements on the oriental, tyrannical, and deceptive connotations of written communication in the *Histories*. In the first place, the Persian habit of sending written messages has to be viewed against the fact that Persians tend anyway to make use of intermediaries for communicative purposes, even when there is no actual physical distance between sender and addressee, in order to create a distance between sender and addressee. Thus, for instance, just before Salamis, Xerxes relies on Mardonius to consult the Persians on whether he should engage in a sea-battle (8. 67. 2–68. 1); this way of presenting Persian interaction has the purpose of emphasizing the aloofness and greatness of the king. As suggested by de Bakker, Herodotus may have modelled his portrayal of the elevated position of the Persian king in relation to his subjects on that of Zeus in the *Iliad*, the only god who does not communicate with mortals directly but always through a messenger.⁸⁴ In this context, de

⁸¹ A reading developed by Steiner 1994: 127–39 and especially 149–54.

⁸² De Bakker 2007: 11 ascribes 812 character-speeches to Greeks and 815 to non-Greeks.

⁸³ Cf. Hartog 1980: 286–8: ‘la lettre a cours surtout dans le monde barbare et non dans le monde grec, à quelques exceptions près . . . la lettre transmet des informations ou des instructions, elle est un mode secret de communiquer et, au total, un mode de l’exercice du pouvoir . . .’

⁸⁴ De Bakker 2007: 54–5, with further examples, and Létoublon 1987: 24. [Arist]. *De Mundo* 398^b4–7 does indeed compare Xerxes to a god dispatching messengers.

Bakker's further remark that there is only one instance in the *Histories* of the use of an intermediary for communication at close range between two Greeks is significant.⁸⁵ Even more significant is the fact that this unique instance is the insulting message sent during the festival of the Gymnopaediae by Leotychidas, through the intermediary of a slave, to Demaratus, after the latter's deposition from kingship (Hdt. 6. 67. 2). The implication is that the behaviour of Spartan kings may at times be close to that of the Persians.

Secondly, it is important not to forget that there is almost no difference, either in form or in function, between written and oral messages, and that in the fifth century it is not yet possible to speak of an 'epistolary genre' recognized as such. The remarkable closeness in the introductory formulae used by Herodotus for both oral and written messages shows that he (and his audience) did not feel the need for a specific language for the latter. Both this closeness and the existence of numerous Greek letters on lead going back to the sixth century BC renders the hypothesis of a Persian origin for the Greek epistolary prescript untenable.⁸⁶ When compared to the relative diversity of the forms of address used between Greek communities, however, the formula 'A to B says thus', used for oral and written messages, seems to convey oriental connotations.

4.1.5. Letter Writing and Other Forms of Writing in Herodotus

The comparison between written and oral messages in the *Histories* has shown that from a qualitative view-point the narrator does not distinguish markedly between the two modes of conveying information at a distance. In Herodotus' work there is no strong divide between written and oral communication; the distinction is rather between public, polis-oriented communication and private communication. The latter presents the deceitful, secretive, and despotic connotations so well brought out by Steiner (1994) because it functions in the interest of a small number of specific individuals. What is ultimately important is not the *medium* of the communicative act, but its *context* (public or private).

A short review of the way other forms of writing function in the *Histories* will confirm the above. Let us start with the inscriptions. Herodotus mentions twelve Greek inscriptions, eleven non-Greek inscriptions, and a bilingual one (Greek and cuneiform), dedicated by Darius. A comparison between this form of writing and the letters brings out a number of differences, but also some similarities. To begin with the differences: even if Herodotus may not have seen all the inscriptions he mentions, he certainly saw most of them; and he could suppose that some of them would be known to his public too. The inscriptions are not messages addressed individually by one sender to one addressee; their function, eminently public-oriented, is to perpetuate *kleos* or fame. Thus as individual objects (and texts) they accomplish the same function as the *Histories* as a whole. This definitely does not apply to the letters Herodotus mentions.⁸⁷ Moreover, epigraphical documents are

⁸⁵ De Bakker 2007: 55.

⁸⁶ A conclusion reached already by van den Hout (1949: 29) and restated by Porciani 1997.

⁸⁷ On the *Histories* as a monument see e.g. Moles 1999; the above makes it difficult to look at the *Histories* as a letter.

much more evenly distributed between Greeks and non-Greeks; for none of them is there any question of secrecy, and for the Greek inscriptions at any rate, there can be no question of tyrannical overtones.

And yet, for all these distinctions, inscriptions do not function very differently from letters. Their writtenness is not a central element, just as the writtenness of letters does not make them very different from oral messages. The best example of this is offered by the first inscription mentioned in the *Histories*: the text engraved on a golden *perirrhanterion* (a vessel for lustral water) originally dedicated at Delphi by Croesus, an inscription proclaiming (falsely) that it was offered by the Lacedaemonians (Hdt. 1. 51. 3). Herodotus' brief comment (which makes for a very awkward sentence, it must be said) puts this false document on exactly the same level as a false oral statement: 'it is inscribed (with letters) saying that it is of the Lacedaemonians, not speaking correctly' (*ἐπιγέγραπται Λακεδαιμονίων φάμενων εἶναι ἀνάθημα, οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγοντες*)⁸⁸: the error is in the statement, not in its writtenness. However, the public inscription perpetuates a wrong statement, just as the preservation of Herodotus' work perpetuates his counter-statement.

Thus, even though inscriptions and letters are written documents, they both present very close connections to the oral worlds of spoken *kleos* and oral messages; the difference between these two types of writing is in the public status of the first, as opposed to the private aspect of the second.

Another class of document that sits squarely between written and oral, public and private, may be of interest: the oracular responses. The work of Herodotus is evidence for the bringing back of an oral oracular answer (so in Athens, the oracles of the Pythia), but also for the writing down by messengers of an answer, which is then brought back to the initiator of the request (e.g. Croesus). The oracle in itself functions always in the same way; it will be written down or transmitted orally depending on the society, the group, or the individual who requires it. In some extreme instances, such as in Athens in 480 BC, there will be a public discussion of the very meaning of the oracle; at the other extreme are the Pisistratids, possessors of written oracles that they keep in boxes. Again, a 'message' can be written or oral, and independently of whether it is written or oral, it can be discussed publicly or kept secret.

4.2. MEDIATED LONG-DISTANCE COMMUNICATION IN THUCYDIDES

While the proem of Herodotus' *Histories* positions the work at the intersection between writtenness and orality, Thucydides' work presents itself, from the very opening sentence, as written: *Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον*,

⁸⁸ This is a problematic passage, and translators and commentators mostly gloss over the issue. Madvig, followed by Legrand, proposed the following attractive correction, which would put the *perirrhanterion* in the role of the speaking object, as in so many archaic inscriptions: *ἐπιγέγραπται Λακεδαιμονίων φάμενον εἶναι ἀνάθημα, οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγον* (for full references see the apparatus and commentary of Asheri 1988, *ad loc.*; and Flower 1991).

‘Thucydides the Athenian wrote the war’.⁸⁹ Here, we have an author who chooses to communicate through writing. How does he present communication—and in particular mediated communication—in his work? The *War* offers a number of instances of mediated communication: besides the letters and the messages or requests transmitted by heralds, a number of speeches are made by *presbeis*, ambassadors representing their cities. Thus out of some 171 acts of communication, some sixty-nine represent mediated communication.⁹⁰ Of these, thirty-nine, in other words the majority, are speeches made by ambassadors; then, there are short communications made by heralds (numbering thirteen, to which may be added four instances in which messengers of unspecified status are sent); and some thirteen instances of letters.

4.2.1. Ambassadors’ Speeches

We may wonder whether ambassadors’ speeches should be considered instances of mediated communication: of course technically they are, in the sense that these men are representing their city in another context; but in most instances the *πρέσβεις* speak freely, as they think most appropriate, and using a first person plural that encompasses themselves and their cities, not in any way giving the impression that they are simply repeating a message. Thucydides’ narrative in the first book offers one of the best examples of ambassadors’ independence: an Athenian deputation who happened to be at Sparta for other business decided to deliver a speech in the meeting convened by the allies to push the Spartans to war.⁹¹ The formulae with which the speeches are introduced and closed tend to reinforce this impression: in most cases, even though in the run-up to the speech Thucydides had stated that an embassy would speak, the speakers in the paragraphs introducing and resuming the speech are defined simply through their

⁸⁹ On the importance of this opening sentence (and of writing in the *War*), see Loraux 1986; Moles 1999 (and Moles 1999: 47–8 for the Herodotean proem); Bakker 2006. On Thucydidean writing in the context of the development of Athenian (and Greek) literacy, Crane 1996: 1–22; Goldhill 2002. I have taken Alberti as the edition of reference for Thucydides; the translations are adapted from Crawley’s.

⁹⁰ Numbers reached through integrating the list of West 1973: 7–15 with Scardino 2007: 387–94 and with those other references to communication that seemed pertinent (I have for instance, following Bearzot 2003: 302–3, included *kerygmata*, as well as simple references to the sending of letters), and then sorting out of the total the cases pertinent to mediated communication. Thus this is not exactly a list of speeches, nor a complete list of all acts of communications. But the overall proportion of the various types of ‘communicative acts’ is important; disagreement over details will not change the overall picture. I have not included treaties; but I agree with the argument of Luschnat (1970: 1127–30) that documents (i.e. letters, but also treaties) were considered by Thucydides as *λόγοι*, in the same measure as speeches, and thus that documents are ‘nicht juristisches Beweismittel... sondern als historisch-politischen Faktor, als reales dynamisches Element der Geschichte selbst betrachtet’. See also the detailed argument of Porciani 2003: Thucydides considered the documents as *logoi*, and so cited them intentionally, for reasons to be determined in each specific case.

⁹¹ Thuc. 1. 72. The Athenians ask the Spartans whether they can speak, and receiving assent, they speak *qua* Athenians (καὶ παρελθόντες οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ἔλεγον τοιάδε, 1. 72. 1); their speech, given in the first person plural, closes with: τοιαῦτα δὲ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι εἶπον (1. 79). Similarly, Themistocles in Sparta (1. 91) acts as an individual and what he says is not mediated speech; at the same time he figures as part of an embassy, and what is more, he delays presenting himself to the magistrates by saying that he must wait for his colleagues (1. 90. 5).

being citizens of a polis: the Corinthians, for instance, or the Corcyraeans.⁹² With very few exceptions (one, Thuc. 1. 139. 3, is discussed below), in the context of embassies the names of the individual speakers are not given. The one important exception is the speeches of Hermocrates and Euphemus in Camarina (the latter introduced as *ὁ δ' Εὐφῆμος ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων πρεσβευτής*, Thuc. 6. 81).⁹³ In internal debates, however, be they internal to Athens or to any other Greek city, the names are mostly given, since the opinion expressed represents that of the individual speaking (so e.g. also in the case of Teutiaplus' speech in 3. 29). Now if Thucydides thought he could keep close to the *ξύμπεσσα γνώμη* (the main thesis) of what had actually been said (1. 22. 1, whatever the exact nature of that closeness), he certainly could have given the name of the actual speaker in most instances: the systematic omission in the case of embassies is, as so many other omissions, significant—here, bespeaking the non-importance of the individual speakers: to all intents and purposes the entire citizenship spoke.

The main task of the ambassadors consisted in persuading their audience on behalf of the city; if they were successful, the polis would, retrospectively as it were, acknowledge their words as its own.⁹⁴ In some specific instances they did have full powers, although of course always within limits, as is shown by an instance in which negotiations fail, when the impression imposes itself that the Spartan envoys do not have full powers (Thuc. 5. 45, where the technical expression *αὐτοκράτορες ἦκειν*, 'to have come with full powers', is used three times; Alcibiades and private discussions play a major role in this failure).⁹⁵

Whatever their exact powers in any given instance, the speech of envoys, whether we consider that they aimed mainly at persuading with general arguments preliminary to the drafting of an agreement or assume that they had full powers, is not really—I suggest—mediated speech: rather, it is presented as the independent speech of a collectivity. When individuals speak independently, on their own account, they are named.

When, however, Thucydides wants to stress the fact that ambassadors are simply conveying a decision already taken elsewhere, a different type of

⁹² Cf. 1. 36. 4 and 1. 44 (speeches of Corinthians and Corcyraeans); 1. 67 and 72 (Corinthians in Sparta); 1. 72–9 (above, n. 91); 1. 90. 1–2 (indirect report of words of Spartan embassy); 1. 119–24 (Corinthians in Sparta); 2. 71. 1–72. 2 (Plataean embassy to Archidamus); 2. 72. 2 (reported speech of the ambassadors of Plataea—and of the Plataeans—to Archidamus). Cf. Bers 1997: 8 on the normality in Greek of couching statements about the activities of city-states in the form 'the Athenians, Corcyraeans, etc. did such and such'. And yet the question asked by Kennedy 1973: xi 'Why does the historian sometimes attribute speeches to specific individuals, sometimes to groups such as "the Athenians", "the Corinthians"?' needs to be taken seriously.

⁹³ Possibly by giving the names of individuals, Thucydides meant to imply that this ought to have been an internal affair among the Siceliots. Alcibiades too speaks in Sparta, but by then he is speaking on his own behalf (6. 88. 10–93. 1).

⁹⁴ See Mosley 1973: 21–9 for a nuanced discussion of the margins of manoeuvre of the ambassadors. The Plutarchan anecdote with which he opens his discussion (Plut. *Lyc.* 25. 4: the Spartan envoy Polycratidas, when asked by the Persian generals 'whether the embassy was there in a private or public capacity, replied: "If we succeed, in a public capacity; if we fail, in a private"') may have actually been applicable to many of the sixth- and fifth-century diplomatic exchanges.

⁹⁵ On *αὐτοκράτωρ* and its difference from *ἀντιπρόεδρος* see the excellent note in Gomme 1959: 426, ad 1. 126. 8; on the powers of *presbeis*, 'full' only within understood limits, see Mosley 1973: 30–8 (for this specific incident 31–2), and Hornblower 2008: 105. For the expression, compare Ar. *Av.* 1595.

enunciation is used, as in the description of the last embassy of the Lacedaemonians before the outbreak of the war reported in the first book, a solemn occasion in which the names of the *presbeis* are indeed given:

τέλος δὲ ἀφικομένων τῶν τελευταίων πρέσβων ἐκ Λακεδαίμονος, Ραμφίου τε καὶ Μελησίππου καὶ Ἀγησάνδρου, καὶ λεγόντων ἄλλο μὲν οὐδὲν ὧν πρότερον εἰώθεσαν, αὐτὰ δὲ τάδε ὅτι Λακεδαιμόνιοι βούλονται τὴν εἰρήνην εἶναι, εἴη δ' ἂν εἰ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας αὐτονόμους ἀφείτε, ποιήσαντες ἐκκλησίαν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι γνώμας σφίσιν αὐτοῖς προτίθεσαν... (1. 139. 3)

Finally, as the last ambassadors from Lacedaemon arrived, namely Rhamphias, Melesippus, and Hegesander, and as they said nothing of what they had used to say earlier, but only this, that ‘The Lacedaemonians desire that there be peace; and there may be, if you restore independence to the Hellenes’, the Athenians called an assembly and held a discussion...

The lack of an address in the opening of the message, the avoidance throughout of a first person plural, and the stress on the origin of the message (the Lacedaemonians) makes it clear that here the *presbeis* are simply conveying the final words of the Spartans, without leaving any space for personal interpretations or additions (something already stated actually by the narrator in introducing them).

The possibilities outlined here are, however, only the extremities of a range that offers possibilities for highlighting key points in the communicative (or non-communicative) process. An interesting instance is offered by the negotiations of the Lacedaemonian ambassadors sent to Athens to propose a peace and the recovery of their men on the island (Thuc. 4. 16. 3–22. 3). The ‘preamble’ with which the speech is introduced, as well as the opening of the speech itself, make it clear that the envoys (*presbeis*) are speaking as negotiators on behalf of the Lacedaemonians (‘the envoys were sent off. Having arrived at Athens, they spoke as follows: “Athenians, the Lacedaemonians have sent us to negotiate for the recovery of the men in the island.”’, Thuc. 4. 16. 3–17. 1).⁹⁶ The envoys keep speaking in the first person plural, and referring to either past events or notions of common wisdom, until 4. 19; at this point, there is a sudden switch to the third person plural (the Lacedaemonians), concomitant with plans for peace and the future:

‘The Lacedaemonians invite you (Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ ὑμᾶς προκαλοῦνται) to make terms with them and to finish the war, offering (διδόντες) peace and an alliance, and that there be a general friendly and happy relationship, and requesting in return (ἀνταποδόντες) the men from the island. They think (ἡγούμενοι) it better that neither should run any further risk, whether by some chance of safety they escape by force, or being taken by siege they find themselves even more in your power. [2] We think (νομίζομεν τε) that great enmities...’ (Thuc. 4. 19. 1)

The switch to the third person is followed by a quick return to the first person plural and to generalities on enmities, moderation, and advantageous policies. This first person plural lasts until almost the very end of the speech, when there is one final switch to the Lacedaemonians as actors, followed by a return to the first

⁹⁶ 4. 16. 3: οἱ πρέσβεις ἀπεστάλησαν. ἀφικόμενοι δὲ εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας ἔλεξαν τοιαύδε. 17. ἔπεμψαν ἡμᾶς Λακεδαιμόνιοι, ὧς Ἀθηναῖοι, περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ νήσῳ ἀνδρῶν πράζοντας...

person plural, paired with a second person plural to indicate the Athenians ('If you realize this, it is possible for you to become firm friends with the Lacedaemonians at their own invitation, which you do not force from them, but oblige them by accepting. [4] And from this friendship consider the advantages that are likely to follow: for if we and you speak the same, the rest of Hellas, you know, will have the greatest respect, being inferior', Thuc. 4. 20. 3–4);⁹⁷ the narrative restarts with the narrator's comment 'so spoke the Lacedaemonians' (οἱ μὲν οὖν Λακεδαιμόνιοι τοσαῦτα εἶπον). When the Athenians, persuaded by Cleon, refuse to accept the proposals, the envoys (so the narrator reports) 'asked that commissioners might be chosen with whom they might confer on each point, and quietly talk the matter over and try to come to some agreement'—and were attacked for this by Cleon, who suggested that the refusal to speak in front of the people and the request for private discussion betrayed their bad intentions. Clearly the envoys had some freedom of action; both this latitude and the very real backing of the Lacedaemonians are conveyed during their speech to the assembly through the switches between first and third person plural.

Once, in 5. 61. 2–3, a speech is presented by the narrator as given by the city through one specific person:

καὶ ἔλεγον οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι Ἀλκιβιάδου πρεσβευτοῦ παρόντος ἔν τε τοῖς Ἀργείοις καὶ τοῖς
 ξυμμάχοις ταῦτά, ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθῶς αἱ σπονδαὶ ἄνευ τῶν ἄλλων ξυμμάχων καὶ γένοιτο
 ... [3] καὶ πείσαντες ...

The Athenians, *through Alcibiades their ambassador there present*, told the Argives and the allies the same, that they had no right to make a truce at all without the consent of their fellow-confederates ... [3] These arguments proving successful ...

But this is a unique instance, and it may actually point to the fact that Alcibiades is here exceeding his instructions;⁹⁸ in most cases, it is the citizenry that speaks. If we discount the examples of what is effectively the city speaking as not being instances of mediated communication *stricto sensu*, we are left with a few cases of envoys relating words of another city or group, heralds transmitting oral messages, and with letters. The Plataean embassy to Athens offers a good example of the first possibility:

ἐλθόντες δὲ οἱ Πλαταιῆς πρέσβεις ὡς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους καὶ βουλευσάμενοι μετ' αὐτῶν
 πάλιν ἦλθον ἀγγέλλοντες τοῖς ἐν τῇ πόλει τοιάδε: [3] οὗτ' ἐν τῷ πρὸ τοῦ χρόνῳ, ὃ ἄνδρες
 Πλαταιῆς, ἀφ' οὗ ξύμμαχοι ἐγενόμεθα, Ἀθηναῖοί φασιν ἐν οὐδενὶ ὑμᾶς προσέσθαι
 ἀδικουμένους οὔτε νῦν περιόψεσθαι, βοηθήσειν δὲ κατὰ δύναμιν. ἐπισκῆπτουσί τε ὑμῖν
 πρὸς τῶν ὄρκων οὓς οἱ πατέρες ὤμοσαν μηδὲν νεωτερίζειν περὶ τὴν ξυμμαχίαν. 74.
 τοιαῦτα τῶν πρέσβεων ἀπαγγειλάντων οἱ Πλαταιῆς ἐβουλεύσαντο Ἀθηναίους μὴ
 προδιδόναι ... (Thuc. 2. 73. 2–74. 1)

The Plataean envoys came to Athens, and after deliberating with the Athenians they brought back the following message to their fellow-citizens: 'Plataeans, the Athenians

⁹⁷ ἦν τε γνώτε, Λακεδαιμονίους ἔξεστιν ὑμῖν φίλους γενέσθαι βεβαίως, αὐτῶν τε προκαλεσασμένων
 χαρισασμένοις τε μᾶλλον ἢ βιασασμένοις. καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὰ ἐνόητα ἀγαθὰ σκοπεῖτε ὅσα εἰκὸς εἶναι: ἡμῶν γὰρ
 καὶ ὑμῶν ταῦτα λεγόντων τό γε ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν ἵστε ὅτι ὑποδεέστερον ὂν τὰ μέγιστα τιμήσει.

⁹⁸ For Fowler 1888: 192, this shows that Alcibiades is now acting as a private individual; he compares with the explicit D. S. 12. 79: ἰδιώτης ὢν.

say that neither in the previous time since we became allies have they allowed you to be wronged, nor will they now, but will assist you to the utmost of their power; and they adjure you, by the oaths which your fathers swore, not to forsake the Athenian alliance.’ 74. When the answer came, the Plataeans resolved not to desert the Athenians.

The message is reported here throughout in the third person: the Plataean envoys are stating what the Athenians said, without adding anything of their own. As for the heralds, they are, unsurprisingly, mostly portrayed as literally reporting the words of the group they represent. In quite a few instances, the ‘transparency’ of the heralds is such that the messenger disappears, as in Herodotus: so for instance in 1. 53. 1–3, a passage in which the Corinthians at Sybota

put some men on board a boat, and sent them without a herald’s wand (ἀνευ κηρυκείου) to the Athenians, to test them. Having sent them, they spoke as follows (πέμψαντές τε ἔλεγον τοιάδε): [2] ‘You do wrong, Athenians (ἀδικεῖτε, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι), to begin war and break the treaty. Engaged in chastizing our enemies, we find you placing yourselves in our path in arms against us. Now if your intentions are to prevent our sailing to Corcyra, or anywhere else that we may wish, and if you are in favour of breaking the treaty, first take us that are here, and treat us as enemies’ (ἡμᾶς τούσδε πρώτους λαβόντες χρήσασθε ὡς πολεμίοις). [3] Such was what they said (οἱ μὲν δὴ τοιαῦτα εἶπον), and as much of the Corcyraeans’ army as were within hearing immediately called out to take them and kill them. But the Athenians answered as follows . . .

So also more than once in the discussions between Plataeans and Thebans at the very beginning of book 2, where the same strategy is applied in two slightly different ways within the space of a few paragraphs. In one instance, the herald emerges out of the collective, is given specific individual words, and then quickly (with an anacoluthon) disappears again into the collectivity:

γνώμην δ’ ἐποιοῦντο κηρύγμασί τε χρήσασθαι ἐπιτηδείους καὶ ἐς ξύμβασιν μᾶλλον καὶ φιλίαν τὴν πόλιν ἀγαγεῖν, καὶ ἀνείπεν ὁ κήρυξ, εἴ τις βούλεται κατὰ τὰ πάτρια τῶν πάντων Βοιωτῶν ξυμμαχεῖν, τίθεσθαι παρ’ αὐτοὺς τὰ ὅπλα, νομίζοντες σφίσι ῥαδίως τοῦτω τῷ τρόπῳ προσχωρήσειν τὴν πόλιν (Thuc. 2. 2. 4)

(The Thebans) determined to make a conciliatory proclamation, and if possible to bring the city to a friendly understanding; and the herald proclaimed, that if any wished according to the ancient custom of the Boeotians to be their ally, they should put their arms with them, thinking that in this way the city would readily join them.

In another instance, the herald is mentioned only to be ‘cancelled’ (thus avoiding the anacoluthon):

οἱ δὲ Πλαταιῆς . . . δέισαντες περὶ τοῖς ἔξω κήρυκα ἐξέπεμψαν παρὰ τοὺς Θηβαίους, λέγοντες ὅτι οὔτε τὰ πεποιημένα ὅσια δράσειαν ἐν σπονδαῖς σφῶν πειραθέντες καταλαβεῖν τὴν πόλιν, τὰ τε ἔξω ἔλεγον αὐτοῖς μὴ ἀδικεῖν: εἰ δὲ μή, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔφασαν αὐτῶν τοὺς ἄνδρας ἀποκτενεῖν οὓς ἔχουσι ζώντας. (Thuc. 2. 5. 5)

But the Plataeans fearing for their fellow-citizens outside the town sent a herald to the Thebans, saying that they had acted outrageously in trying to seize their city in time of peace, and warning them against any outrage on those outside; otherwise, they themselves said that they would put to death the men they had in their hands.

Ironically, in a world where writing has become much more important, ‘scripted’ speech seems overall to have shrunk. The norm in the *Peloponnesian*

War, especially in its first part, is either face-to-face open speech, in which a named citizen speaks to his fellow citizens or entire (anonymous) citizen bodies engage in discussion with each other; or, less frequently, formalized communication through heralds. Divergent attitudes (mostly concentrated in the second part of the work) are flagged up as dysfunctional.⁹⁹ Instances of dysfunctional attitudes towards communication of course abound: they comprise all those cases in which someone suggests that discussion take place among a restricted group (e.g. 4. 22. 1–3; 5. 27. 2; 5. 36; 5. 37; 5. 43. 3; the Melian dialogue)—as well as letters. This dysfunctional attitude is most notably present in the epistolary exchanges of the first book, which go back to the time immediately following the Persian wars, and then again markedly in the fifth and eighth books—that is, in the second part of Thucydides' work—possibly to highlight the contradictions and changes in the normal diplomatic practice brought about by the war.

4.2.2. Letters in Thucydides

For all the differences between Herodotus and Thucydides in what concerns the formal aspects in the presentation of oral messages, the conclusions reached on the uses of letter writing in Herodotus are supported by the picture of epistolary communication offered by Thucydides' work. Thematically, quite a few of these letters have to do with intrigue and death. If we look at senders and addressees, out of thirteen probable references to letters, five concern exchanges between a Greek and a Persian, a very high proportion for a work much more focused than the *Histories* on the Greek world.¹⁰⁰ The remaining eight letters reflect communication internal to the Greek world, and more precisely, communication between Athenians, between Spartans, or between Spartans and Athenians. An epistolary thread thus links the three powers fighting for the hegemony.

As for the relation between written and oral communication, many—but definitely not all—of the Thucydidean instances of epistolary exchange could have been replaced without problems by an oral exchange. A comparison between letters and the other speech-acts in the *War* highlights the following features.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ I develop here in another direction the Thucydidean theme of the comparison between cities and the individual, sketched by Morrison 1994: if Thucydides is fond of comparing cities and individuals, it is indeed because cities do behave as individuals; but when individuals and not the city predominate, disaster looms. Although made from a different angle and aiming at a different conclusion (an evolution in Thucydides' style and in his approach to the question of the importance of individuals in history), observations on Thucydidean diplomacy close to those sketched above are in Westlake 1970–1, who emphasizes the fact that in the second part of the *War* Thucydides includes 'far more and much fuller information about diplomacy conducted by very small groups, often in secret and sometimes with wholly negative results' (228); see esp. 232–3 for anonymous ambassadors' speeches, and 235–9 for negotiations in which individuals play an important role.

¹⁰⁰ Momigliano 1966: 817 remarks that it is curious that out of the eleven documents cited by Thucydides five concern Persian affairs (the letters between Xerxes and Pausanias, and the three versions of the agreement between Sparta and Persia of 411 BC), and wonders whether Thucydides may here have followed the example of an Ionian historian, who might have derived his attention to documents from the Persians themselves.

¹⁰¹ What follows is based on the first half of the table of all speech-acts in the *War* drafted by Luschkat (1970: 1163–6). The other half is not pertinent, since a letter is usually a document sent by an individual and not by a multitude (although in theory a polis could have sent a letter).

In general, in Thucydides addresses by individuals to individuals are much rarer than addresses to large numbers; within this overall frame, letters may appear as indirect speech addressed by one person to another (for example, 8. 50. 2, Phrynichus to Astyochus, comparable to the exchange in indirect speech between an Athenian ally and one of the Spartiate prisoners from Sphakteria in 4. 40. 2), and as indirect speech addressed by one to many (4. 50. 2, letter of Artaxerxes to the Spartans, comparable to a number of addresses in indirect speech by individuals, be they heralds, generals, or politicians, to groups). Letters also appear as direct speech addressed by one person to another individual (1. 128. 7 and 1. 129. 3, the letter sent by Pausanias to Xerxes and Xerxes' answer), while instances of direct, face-to-face speech between two individuals are much more difficult to find.¹⁰² Finally, both letters and 'speeches' can combine direct and indirect speech: the letter of Themistocles to Artaxerxes (1. 137. 4) is comparable to the dialogue between the Ambraciote herald and an Athenian (3. 113. 3). On the whole, then, and from a formal point of view, in Thucydides' work letters function as oral exchanges would.

Before discussing the letters themselves, it is necessary to address the question of the dislocation of these documents across the work. Four of the five references to epistolary communication between Greeks and Persians come from the digressions on Pausanias and Themistocles in Thucydides' book 1, digressions narrating events of the early seventies; it has been often felt that these digressions are in a distinct, fairly different narrative style from that of the rest of the work.¹⁰³ Another group is formed by the seven letters mentioned in book 8: this is notoriously an unfinished book (unfinished at any rate in the sense that it ends in mid-sentence), a book moreover including, besides these references to letters, a number of written documents—and no direct speeches. These features of the eighth book have given rise to unending discussions as to the shape it might have had if polished to completion.¹⁰⁴ The concentration of letters in some specific parts of Thucydides' work may mean that we should reassess the importance attributed by the historian to this type of document. And yet, while keeping in

¹⁰² Luschnat suggests the address of Brasidas to Clearchus in the context of his speech at Amphipolis, 5. 9. 7 (and, rather oddly, the epigram of Pausanias to Apollo, 1. 132. 2), but in both cases there is a larger implied audience, and this is emphatically not—or should emphatically not—be the case with letters, although they do become public.

¹⁰³ The high number of letters in book 1 is one of the reasons for Westlake's hypothesis (1977: 102–3) that there was a written source for the excursuses on Themistocles and Pausanias. The reason highlighted by an ancient scholiast, commenting on 1. 126–7: 'Some, admiring the perspicuity of the narrative about Cylon, have said: "here the lion smiled"', i.e. a different narrative style, is possibly the most convincing argument. See Gomme 1959: 446–7; Hornblower 1991: 211–12.

¹⁰⁴ Overview of the history of the question in Hornblower 2008: 1–4 and 883–6; see also on the status of documents Porciani 2003 and Bearzot 2003 (ample review of all types of documents present in Thucydides). Luschnat 1970: 1112–32 offers the best, most sensible, and at the same time most concise discussion of the question of the completeness of the work, with all that this involves concerning speeches and documents; he shows very clearly that homogeneity was not necessarily a Thucydidean concern, and hints at the fact that the different narrative styles are adjusted to the requirement of narrating different historical periods and events (a point further developed by Rood 1998). Lane Fox 2010 makes a plausible case for Lichas being the channel through which many documents reached Thucydides; but he does not explain satisfactorily the distribution of the documents within the work, and dismisses too lightly issues of composition and meaning.

mind that there are some difficulties, the best way of proceeding must be to start from the *War* as we have it, and to take these differences in narrative style not as marks of incompleteness, but as potentially significant.¹⁰⁵

Let us then start from the epistolary exchanges between Persians and Greeks. Not only are these closer in time to the Herodotean letters (both in their historical, extradiegetic time, since the events narrated belong to the early seventies, and in their narrative time, since in this part of the *War* Thucydides is bridging the interval between the end of the *Histories* and the beginning of the Peloponnesian war—moreover, this might be an early part of Thucydides' work); they also mirror some of their main themes: deception, despotism, deadliness. In his excursus on Pausanias, Thucydides quotes the text of a letter (ἐπιστολή, 1. 128. 6) sent by Pausanias, the Spartan regent, to Xerxes (Thuc. 1. 128. 7); he gives a verbatim translation of Xerxes' answer (1. 129. 3); and he mentions the interception by the ephors of another letter sent by Pausanias to Xerxes, of which he gives a paraphrase (1. 132. 5).¹⁰⁶ Discussion of these documents has tended to concentrate on their authenticity, and on their origin; I suggest looking rather at their 'shape' and their function, in the first book and in the work as a whole.

The context of the first letter is as follows: at the time of the capture of Byzantium, Pausanias sent the king some relatives whom he had taken prisoner, saying to the rest of the Greeks that they had escaped; the captives were accompanied by an Eretrian, Gongylus, to whom Pausanias entrusted a letter:

ἔπεμψε δὲ καὶ ἐπιστολὴν τὸν Γόγγυλον φέροντα αὐτῷ· ἐνεγέγραπτο δὲ τάδε ἐν αὐτῇ, ὡς ὕστερον ἀνηνρέθη: [7] Πausanίας ὁ ἡγεμὼν τῆς Σπάρτης τοῦσδε τέ σοι χαρίζεσθαι βουλόμενος ἀποπέμπει δορὶ ἑλών, καὶ γνώμην ποιούμεαι, εἰ καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ, θυγατέρα τε τὴν σὴν γῆμαι καὶ σοὶ Σπάρτην τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Ἑλλάδα ὑποχέριον ποιῆσαι. δυνατὸς δὲ δοκῶ εἶναι ταῦτα πράξαι μετὰ σοῦ βουλευόμενος. εἰ οὖν τί σε τούτων ἀρέσκει, πέμπε ἄνδρα πιστὸν ἐπὶ θάλασσαν δι' οὗ τὸ λοιπὸν τοὺς λόγους ποιησόμεθα. 129. τοσαῦτα μὲν ἡ γραφὴ ἐδήλου, Ξέρξης δὲ ᾗσθη τε τῇ ἐπιστολῇ... (Thuc. 1. 128. 6–129. 1)

He also sent to him Gongylos carrying a letter; this was written in it, as was afterwards discovered: [7] 'Pausanias, the general of Sparta, desiring to do you a favour, sends you these, his prisoners of war. I propose also, if it is agreeable to you, to marry your daughter, and to make Sparta and the rest of Hellas subject to you. I think I am able to do this, with your co-operation. Accordingly if any of this pleases you, send a trustworthy man to the sea through whom we may in future conduct our correspondence.' 129. The writing revealed as much, and Xerxes was pleased with the letter.

The letter begins in the third person, and goes straight to the point, omitting any formal address or salutation. Already in the second sentence there is a shift to

¹⁰⁵ Rood's (1998) position: to see whether it is possible to make sense of the different narrative styles in terms of different narrative objectives, and thus to first try to account for what we have on its own terms. In a number of instances this works.

¹⁰⁶ On the questions raised by these letters, and by the Thucydidean tradition on Pausanias, see Nafissi 2004, with further bibliography. Clearly, these documents are fakes, possibly created in Sparta to justify *a posteriori* the condemnation of Pausanias (so Nafissi); alternatively, they could have been forged in Sparta before the death of Pausanias, or they might be an Athenian falsification going back to the years of the foundation of the Delian league. Gauger's hypothesis (2000: 263–4), that these are authentic letters, rendered public by the Spartans immediately before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, or also after 404, is unconvincing.

the first person, with the rather direct request to marry Xerxes' daughter, and the hyperbolic offer of making Sparta and all of Greece subservient to Persia. The letter closes on a first person plural, encompassing sender and addressee, Pausanias and Xerxes (rhetorically, an astute move). The letter's inauthenticity can hardly be doubted: Pausanias might have kept a copy of Xerxes' letter, but his own letters would have been impossible to retrieve; moreover, the tone of the letter is unlikely to reflect what Pausanias might possibly have written; the *ὡς ὕστερον ἀνηυρέθη* must refer to later oral reports of the presumed content, or to the alleged discovery of an (inauthentic) letter; in the same direction goes the narrator's summary. Finally, the reaction of Xerxes (*ἤσθη*) is, as pointed out by Gomme, typically Herodotean—and of course an inference.¹⁰⁷ To this, Xerxes answers by sending a trusted man, Artabazus, with a royal signet and a letter:

τὴν ἐπιστολὴν διέπεμψεν· ἀντενεγέγραπτο δὲ τάδε· ὧδε λέγει βασιλεὺς Ξέρξης Πausanίᾳ· καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν οὓς μοι πέραν θαλάσσης ἐκ Βυζαντίου ἔσωσας κείσεται σοι εὐεργεσία ἐν τῷ ἡμετέρῳ οἴκῳ ἐς αἰεὶ ἀνάγραφτος, καὶ τοῖς λόγοις τοῖς ἀπὸ σοῦ ἀρέσκομαι· καὶ σε μήτε νύξ μήθ' ἡμέρα ἐπισχέτω ὥστε ἀνεῖναι πράσσειν τι ὧν ἐμοὶ ὑπischνεί, μηδὲ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου δαπάνη κεκωλύσθω μηδὲ στρατιᾶς πλήθει, εἴ ποί δεῖ παραγίγνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ μετ' Ἀртаβάζου ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ, ὃν σοι ἔπεμψα, πρᾶσσε θαρσῶν καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ καὶ τὰ σὰ ὅπῃ κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα ἔξει ἀμφοτέροις. (Thuc. 1. 129. 3)

He sent over the letter, which contained the following answer: 'Thus says King Xerxes to Pausanias. For the men whom you have saved for me across the sea from Byzantium, an obligation will be laid up for you in our house, recorded forever; and with your proposals I am well pleased. Let neither night nor day stop you from diligently performing any of your promises to me, neither for cost of gold nor of silver let them be hindered, nor yet for number of troops, wherever it may be that their presence is needed; but with Artabazus, an honourable man whom I send to you, boldly advance my objects and yours, as may be most for the honour and interest of us both.'

The letter opens with the type of address that had been used in Herodotus' work to introduce letters by kings or tyrants, and that reflects the actual formula used by Persian kings; some of the expressions used in the body of the letter find parallels in oriental expressions.¹⁰⁸ This in itself cannot be used as a proof of authenticity: Herodotus' work shows that the form of address and the language typical of an oriental king were common knowledge. If the letter is authentic, it shows that exchanges in epistolary format took place between Persians and Greeks; if it is a false document produced to incriminate Pausanias, its appropriateness in terms of language demonstrates a remarkable familiarity with Persian epistolary practices, a familiarity necessarily based on other letters and exchanges. As a result, the question of the authenticity of this specific letter loses much of its importance

¹⁰⁷ Gomme 1959: 432. Gomme highlights the difficulty of procuring the original of Pausanias' letter to Xerxes (and of Themistocles' to Artaxerxes); but he also adds that, by using *τάδε* rather than *τοιάδε*, Thucydides might mean that he is quoting word for word. One could object that the *τοσαῦτα* (rather than *ταῦτα*, and moreover in conjunction with *δηλοῦν*) summarizing the letter speaks for the opposite assumption. Hdt. 5. 32 reports (doubtfully: εἰ δὲ ἀληθὴς γέ ἐστι ὁ λόγος) that Pausanias was betrothed to a daughter of the noble Persian Megabates.

¹⁰⁸ See Gomme 1959: 432, who stresses the parallelism with both the beginning and the conclusion (ll. 15–17) of the letter of Darius to Gadatas (M.–L. no. 12), and with Hdt. 8. 85. 3; also Hornblower 1991: 215–16.

from the point of view of the evolution of the epistolary form (of course not for what concerns internal Spartan politics and the fate of Pausanias).

At any rate, the letter (this time, τὰ γράμματα, 1. 130. 1) has a dire effect on Pausanias, who begins to live in a grand style, to dress with a Median dress, to be attended by a bodyguard of Medes and Persians . . . and to make himself difficult of access.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the Lacedaemonians recall him a first time; Pausanias is acquitted, but the Lacedaemonians do not give him any further public office.

At this point, on his own initiative Pausanias sails again towards the Hellespont (δημοσίᾳ μὲν οὐκέτι ἐξεπέμφθη, ἰδίᾳ δὲ . . . , 1. 128. 3), and once again lays himself open to suspicion. As a result, the ephors send a herald with a *skytale*, ordering him to follow the herald, or else the Spartans would declare war against him (πέμψαντες κήρυκα οἱ ἔφοροι καὶ σκυτάλην εἶπον τοῦ κήρυκος μὴ λείπεσθαι, εἰ δὲ μή, πόλεμον αὐτῷ Σπαρτιάτας προαγορεύειν, 1. 131. 1). Pausanias returns and is thrown in prison, but after a while manages to get out. For the Spartans, Thucydides says, had no clear evidence (φανερὸν . . . σημείον) against him, although his behaviour both in the past (here Thucydides mentions the epigram on the tripod at Delphi) and in the present continued to cause offence, and although there were rumours of his conspiring with the helots.¹¹⁰ It is finally a stratagem devised by Pausanias to guarantee his own security that causes his undoing: a messenger, a man of Argylus who had once been a favourite of Pausanias, chosen to bring a letter of his to Artabazus, noticed that none of the previous messengers had ever come back; after preparing a counterfeit seal, so that he could reseal the letter if necessary, he opened it, found that it contained the order to put him to death, and showed it to the ephors. Interestingly, this last part is introduced with a qualification (ὥς λέγεται, 1. 132. 5, reappearing, always apropos of Pausanias, in 1. 134. 1); and the text of the letter is not given (the only part of the content summarized refers to the order of putting the messenger to death). And yet, this is the one letter that could most easily have been produced . . .¹¹¹

In the excursus on Themistocles, closely linked to the preceding, since the ephors are prompted to accuse Themistocles in front of the Athenians because of facts discovered during their enquiry on Pausanias, Thucydides partly quotes, partly reports in indirect speech, the text of another letter (γράμματα, 1. 137. 3), allegedly sent by Themistocles to Artaxerxes. This is once again a very interesting document, both in itself, and for the way it is introduced in the *War*:

¹⁰⁹ δυσπρόσοδόν τε αὐτὸν παρέιχε, reinforced by the following sentence: he treats everyone with such temper that no one dares to come near, τῇ ὀργῇ οὕτω χαλεπῇ ἐχρήτο ἐς πάντας ὁμοίως ὥστε μηδένα δύνασθαι προσιέναι, 1. 130. 2. One is here strongly reminded of the invention by Atossa of epistolary writing—aimed at imposing a distance—and of the rise to the Median throne of Deioces, Hdt. 1. 99–100 (see above, 87–9, as well as below, 233). The signet ring does not play any role in the story; possibly it was simply felt to be one of the necessary ingredients.

¹¹⁰ The lack of proof at this point (Thuc. 1. 132, after Pausanias has been for a time in prison) is another element for the inauthenticity of the previous two letters.

¹¹¹ What follows is also not without problems: in the conversation arranged by the ephors, who wish to overhear, the man of Argylus affirms to have served Pausanias well in his previous negotiations with the king—and yet all previous messengers had been put to death. Gomme 1959: 436 attempts to solve the problem by suggesting that earlier negotiations in the Troad are meant, but he also mentions Steup's solution, to bracket πρὸς βασιλέα and to understand negotiations with the helots.

[4] ἐδήλου δὲ ἡ γραφή ὅτι Θεμιστοκλῆς ἦκω παρὰ σέ, ὃς κακὰ μὲν πλείστα Ἑλλήνων εἴργασμαι τὸν ὑμέτερον οἶκον, ὅσον χρόνον τὸν σὸν πατέρα ἐπιόντα ἐμοὶ ἀνάγκη ἡμυνόμεν, πολὺ δ' ἔτι πλείω ἀγαθὰ, ἐπειδὴ ἐν τῷ ἀσφαλεῖ μὲν ἐμοί, ἐκείνῳ δὲ ἐν ἐπικινδύνῳ πάλιν ἡ ἀποκομιδὴ ἐγίγνετο. καὶ μοι εὐεργεσία ὀφείλεται (γράφας τήν τε ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος προάγγελσιν τῆς ἀναχωρήσεως καὶ τὴν τῶν γεφυρῶν, ἣν ψευδῶς προσποιήσατο, τότε δι' αὐτὸν οὐ διάλυσεν), καὶ νῦν ἔχων σε μεγάλα ἀγαθὰ δρᾶσαι πάρεμι διωκόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων διὰ τὴν σὴν φιλίαν. βούλομαι δ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἐπισχῶν αὐτός σοι περὶ ὧν ἦκω δηλώσαι. (Thuc. 1. 137. 4)

The writing stated that 'I, Themistocles, am come to you, who did your house more harm than any of the Hellenes when I was compelled to defend myself against your father's invasion, but far more good during his retreat, which brought no danger for me but much for him. For the past, you are a good turn in my debt,'—here he mentioned the warning sent to Xerxes from Salamis to retreat, as well as his finding the bridges unbroken, which, as he falsely pretended, was due to him—'for the present, able to do you great service, I am here, pursued by the Hellenes for my friendship for you. I desire, having waited one year, to declare in person the reasons of my coming.'

The letter is throughout written in the first person, without any form of greeting, and it mixes direct and indirect speech, a fact that might betray the reworking of a bare summary.¹¹² From the point of view of the structure of the passage, it is interesting to note that the same terminology recurs in the narrator's introduction and in the conclusion of the letter: ἐδήλου δὲ ἡ γραφή ὅτι ἦκω ~ ἦκω δηλώσαι: the writing does the initial 'showing', to be completed orally by Themistocles himself. Of course, the same problem arises here as for the letter of Pausanias to Xerxes: how could a letter addressed to the King of Persia have entered the public domain? Unsurprisingly, when the narrative resumes, we find another qualifying ὡς λέγεται, 'it is said' (1. 138. 1). More interesting is the fact that the letter refers to the two (oral) messages that, according to Herodotus, were sent to Xerxes by Themistocles through the intermediary of Sicinnus (Hdt. 8. 75 and Hdt. 8. 110. 3).¹¹³ Stories concerning Themistocles will have begun to circulate early on; they will have given a large place to his communicative skills, whether in giving speeches, in sending a messenger with a deceitful oral message, or in sending a letter. There is a certain symmetry in having the two heroes of the Persian wars end in parallel disgrace, both writing letters to the Persian king—a symmetry that may have played a role in the formation of the tradition.¹¹⁴

To these four instances of epistolary exchanges, all involving Persia, should be added the reference to letters (ἐπιστολάς) written 'in Assyrian characters' (i.e., in this context, in Aramaic), sent by Artaxerxes through the mediation of the Persian Artaphernes to the Spartans, but intercepted by the Athenians in the winter of

¹¹² Cf. Gomme 1959: 440–1; Gomme's further comment about the move in the later romanced stories on Themistocles from a letter to a speech points to something potentially important; but his conclusion (that the speech cannot have been authentic, but the letter, *in substance*, might be [my italics]) seems to me off the mark.

¹¹³ Gomme 1959: 440–1.

¹¹⁴ For the diffusion of sympotic songs concerning heroes of the Persian war, and Themistocles in particular, see e.g. the poem of Timocreon (727 PMG) with Stehle 1994. A literary source, and in particular the names of Charon and of Stesimbrotus, has been suggested as the source for this part of Thucydides' narrative—they would explain what is felt to be the 'Ionian', Herodotean style of this part. See Westlake 1977; Bearzot 2003: 285; Ceccarelli forthcoming (c), *BNJ* 262 (Charon of Lampsakos) T1, F1, and Biographical Essay.

424 BC (Thuc. 4. 50. 2: οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τὰς μὲν ἐπιστολὰς μεταγραφάμενοι ἐκ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων γραμμάτων ἀνέγνωσαν).¹¹⁵ The content of the letters is simply summarized, as is reasonable, since this exchange and its interception did not have any impact on this part of the war; the main point was, according to Thucydides, that the King, having received a number of Spartan envoys, none saying the same thing, now asked them to send someone with definite proposals in the company of Artaphernes. The Athenian reaction was themselves to send an embassy to Persia, which, however, turned round after reaching Ephesus on the news of the death of Artaxerxes. Athenians and Spartans may have had with them letters or not; but the presence of letters, together with an envoy, is stressed only for the Persian side.

As for the remaining letters, they include the famous letter sent by Nicias to the Athenians, reported in its entirety in direct speech (Thuc. 7. 11–15); and a group of seven letters, all written in the winter of 412/411, and all mentioned in the eighth book.

Nicias' letter is a fascinating document; it has been discussed more than once. This is probably not 'the' letter written by Nicias; it was composed by Thucydides in the form of a speech. The epistolary status of this message was discussed already by ancient critics: Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Thuc. 42) calls it ἐπιστολή, a letter, but mentions it in the course of a discussion of Nicias' assembly speeches; the author of the treatise *De elocutione* includes it in its condemnation of those letters that, because of their excessive length, end up being treatises rather than letters.¹¹⁶ Ancient theorists insist that letters should be short and to the point; however, their parameters, including the norm about length, may not have applied to the fifth-century notion of an ἐπιστολή: the long, detailed, and impersonal report of a general, sent over a distance and giving advice, might well have been called *epistole*. Some indications may come from the syntagms δηλοῦσαν τοιάδε (7. 10), with which the letter is introduced, and ἡ μὲν τοῦ Νικίου ἐπιστολή τοσαῦτα ἐδήλου (7. 16), indicating the return to the narrative. In presenting the letter, Thucydides combines the pronoun used to introduce speeches, τοιάδε (a pronoun not used to refer to letters or written texts, inscriptions, or treaties, which are usually introduced with a form of ὅδε), and a form of δηλόω, the verb used for the letters of Pausanias and Themistocles, but usually not for speeches; when resuming the narrative, δηλόω appears again, and with τοσαῦτα.¹¹⁷ Thus it is reasonable to assume that Nicias' own letter will have had a different shape; the one given in the *War* is a Thucydidean creation.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ See Hornblower 1996: 205–7 for an updated discussion of the letter itself, and of the chronological problems linked to the following Athenian embassy and the death of Artaxerxes. This is one of the rare references of Thucydides to Persia (discounting book 8), and it is difficult to contextualize it: should we imagine that such exchanges were a relatively frequent thing? Would Thucydides, once he realized the importance of Persia in the later course of the war, have added precisions?

¹¹⁶ Demetr. *Eloc.* 228. Cf. Van den Hout 1949: 37–8; Rosenmeyer 2001: 58–9.

¹¹⁷ τὰδε: cf. 1. 128. 6, 1. 129. 3 (letters), 3. 104. 5 (poetry; cf. 4. 104. 4, Thucydides' own work), 5. 17. 2, 5. 77. 1, 5. 78 (negotiations and treaties); see 1. 139. 3, the embassy of the three named Spartan heralds, discussed above, 133; and 3. 29. 2, the speech of Teutiaplos, also exceptionally named. Note, however, that when resuming the narrative after a letter, τοσαῦτα (used for speeches as an alternative to τοιάδε) is found: 128. 7: τοσαῦτα μὲν ἡ γραφή ἐδήλου. For δηλόω with a letter, see also 137. 4: ἐδήλου δὲ ἡ γραφή ὅτι.

¹¹⁸ See Dover, in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970: 385: 'the real letter may have contained many more detailed facts and figures'. Hornblower 2008: 557–68 calls it a 'remarkable piece of generic

This letter may have been an early instance of a communicative typology that will be better attested later: the reports sent by campaigning *strategoï* to the polis.¹¹⁹ Nicias himself refers, in his 'letter', to previous communications, although not necessarily written ones (τὰ μὲν πρότερον πραχθέντα, ὧ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐν ἄλλαις πολλαῖς ἐπιστολαῖς ἴστε, 7. 11. 1).¹²⁰ And yet, how frequent will the sending of letters back home have been? And how did Thucydides look upon it?

Thucydides stresses at length Nicias' special reasons for writing: 'he feared that the messengers, either through inability to speak, or through failure of memory, or from a wish to please the multitude, might not report the truth', in other words, they might not be able to describe the situation with the precision and accuracy required; he thus 'thought it best to write a letter, to ensure that the Athenians should know his own opinion without its being lost in transmission, and be able to decide upon the real facts of the case (περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας)'.¹²¹ The detailed presentation of Nicias' thoughts (note the extraordinary expression γνώμην . . . ἐν τῷ ἀγγέλω ἀφανισθεῖσαν, 'opinion . . . lost in transmission', but literally 'lost in the messenger') tells something about the respective status of public speech and written communication: for Nicias, an assembly speech is a dialogue between messengers and *demos*; it may afford a better understanding of the situation, but it may also lead astray. A letter instead represents the point of view of the sender, fixed forever with precision; it is—Nicias thinks—closer to the truth. The very presence of such a lengthy explanation underlines the peculiarity of the choice of sending a written message.¹²² Hence the impression that Nicias and Thucydides may here have just made a discovery, and that they may be explaining it to the public.¹²³

But at this point it is necessary to ask: What is the 'sign' of this discovery? Nicias of course thinks that writing a letter will allow a decision based on a better, more

experimentation. Nowhere else does Thucydides try to present both a narrative and an expression of a sustained argument, both of them focalized through an individual' (557). For Canfora (1990: 198) Thucydides may have paraphrased or reworked a document that he had personally consulted.

¹¹⁹ Instances of communication between generals and the polis are discussed below (for Sparta), and in chs. 6 (266–7, 275–6, 280) and 7 (317, 326; cf. Appendix 3 no. 27). The tradition on the letter sent by Cleon after the victory at Sphacteria (discussed above, 94–8) offers one possible earlier instance of an official written communication sent to the Athenian assembly by a general.

¹²⁰ Dover (in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970: 385) points out that in view of Thucydides' stress on the exceptionality of Nicias' decision, the allusion to earlier exchanges (ἐν ἄλλαις πολλαῖς ἐπιστολαῖς) should not be interpreted in connection with 'letters': 'It follows necessarily that by ἐπιστολή Thucydides means "message".' See also, in the same sense, Hornblower 2008: 560.

¹²¹ Thuc. 7. 8. 2: Φοβούμενος μὴ οἱ πεμπόμενοι ἢ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ λέγειν ἀδυνασίαν ἢ καὶ μνήμης ἑλλειπὺς γιγνόμενοι ἢ τῷ ὄχλῳ πρὸς χάριν τι λέγοντες οὐ τὰ ὄντα ἀπαγγέλλωσιν, ἐγραψεν ἐπιστολήν, νομίζων οὕτως ἂν μάλιστα τὴν αὐτοῦ γνώμην μηδὲν ἐν τῷ ἀγγέλω ἀφανισθεῖσαν μαθόντας τοὺς Ἀθηναίους βουλευσάσθαι περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας.

¹²² So Dover, in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970: 385: 'Thucydides makes it sound as if it were unusual for a general to write home'; even more radical is Harris 1989: 78: 'he had probably not written often if at all before, in spite of 7. 11. 1, where ἐπιστολή probably means "message"'; Hornblower 2008: 555. A number of scholars have, however, taken the opposite view, that Thucydides is here thinking of numerous real letters sent by Nicias: so Longo 1978: 540 and n. 7; Stéfanis 1997: 201–2; Rosenmeyer 2001: 57–60.

¹²³ Harris 1989: 78. See also the short, but illuminating, remarks of Bertrand 1985: 110 and Nicolai 2004: 119 (it was not normal practice at the time for a general to send a letter; written messages were generally accompanied by oral presentations).

precise knowledge of the events. He thus sees in writing a positive solution to the difficulties of communication at a distance; but he also acknowledges that a letter cannot entirely convey reality, so much so that he gives explicit instructions to the messengers to enable them to answer eventual questions. The narrator does not express himself either way—he simply reports in detail the reasons for Nicias' decision. Most interpreters follow Nicias in his assessment, and assume that Thucydides agreed with him in recognizing the greater reliability of a written document against oral information.¹²⁴ Of course, there is something true here; after all, Thucydides wrote his work, and could present it as a *κτήμα ἐς αἰεί*, a permanent possession, because it was in writing. But should the same criteria be applied to a historiographical work (Thucydides' *κτήμα ἐς αἰεί*, whose value will be grasped in time and which is explicitly contrasted with a showpiece for a single hearing, *ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν*) and to an official letter addressed on a specific occasion to a large body (the *βουλή* first, and then possibly the assembly)?

A comparison with the position upheld by the rhetor Alcidas in his work *Against Those Who Write Written Speeches, or, On the Sophists* may be helpful. For the sake of the argument, Alcidas takes in his speech an extreme, almost paradoxical position, arguing in a written speech against writing speeches; but he does not altogether deny the value of writing. His point is that elaborate speeches, in which the choice of words is fixed, because the speech has been written in advance, insinuate in the audience the feeling of being in front of something artificial; they breed incredulity and antipathy (*ἀπιστίας καὶ φθόνου τὰς τῶν ἀκουόντων γνώμας ἐμπιμπλάσι*, 12). Moreover in improvising the speaker can react to the public (22–3), exactly Nicias' point, but here seen as a positive rather than a negative quality.

The most important sentence for our purpose comes from the close of the speech: Alcidas asserts there that 'the precision that characterizes written speeches does not bring the same advantage as the opportunity that declamations of speeches composed on the spur of the moment offer'.¹²⁵ His conclusion is that 'whoever wants to become a brilliant orator and not simply a good writer of written speeches, whoever wants to be able to make the most of occasions rather than speak with precision, whoever wants to have on his side the goodwill of the assembly rather than its diffidence as antagonist', this person will do well to dedicate himself to the art of improvising speeches.¹²⁶ Throughout his pamphlet, Alcidas has in mind success with the public and an ability to grasp the *kairon*, the right opportunity; he is of course aware of the potentialities of writing, and says as much. But these potentialities lie in a different area from that covered by deliberative or judicial speeches: writing is useful because by looking closely at written texts, as in a mirror, it is possible to observe the progress of intellect; and it

¹²⁴ So e.g. Bearzot 2003: 287, who suggests that the thoughts of Nicias here may give us a clue to understanding Thucydides' documentary choices; Longo 1978: 520–1.

¹²⁵ Alc. 1 (*On Those Who Write Written Speeches*), 33: οὐ γὰρ τοσαύτην ὀφέλειαν αἱ τῶν γραπτῶν λόγων ἀκρίβειαι παραδιδόασιν, ὅσῃν εὐκαιρίαν αἱ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα λεγομένων δηλώσεις ἔχουσιν.

¹²⁶ ὅστις οὖν ἐπιθυμεῖ βῆτωρ γενέσθαι δεινὸς ἀλλὰ μὴ ποιητῆς λόγων ἱκανός, καὶ βούλεται μᾶλλον τοῖς καιροῖς χρῆσθαι καλῶς ἢ τοῖς ὀνόμασι λέγειν ἀκριβῶς, καὶ τὴν εὐνοίαν τῶν ἀκροωμένων ἐπικούρον ἔχειν σπουδάζει μᾶλλον ἢ τὸν φθόνον ἀνταγωνιστήν... Alc. 1. 34. See in general the remarks of Avezzù 1982: 72–8.

is useful in order to leave a memory.¹²⁷ Alcidas' pamphlet is dated approximately to the 390s, and any direct contact between his work and Thucydides' is unlikely; yet Alcidas is part of that debate on writing and its uses that is present in tragedy, and that was linked, in the fifth and early fourth century, to the character of Palamedes (an *Odysseus*, or, *Against Palamedes for Treason* is also attributed to Alcidas). His ideas were certainly in the air. The terminology, in the passages quoted and throughout the pamphlet, is strikingly close to that employed by Thucydides in 1. 22, and more generally in the methodological chapters and the 'archaeology'—of course, the connotations it has in Alcidas are exactly opposite to those in Thucydides. But then they have two very different goals in mind: on the one hand, a work for reading that will not please the majority but will provide the few who will tackle it with instruction and a way of understanding human behaviour; on the other, a speech that will please, that will rise to the *kairos*, and thus win the approval of the majority.¹²⁸

Thus the fact that Nicias, in this specific context, settles for the truth, *aletheia*, rather than for being able to grasp the *kairon* (or, more precisely: rather than trusting his envoy's ability to grasp the *kairon*), should not be uncritically assessed as positive; it is just one more trait that fits his character, a character that will be one of the causes of the catastrophe of the Sicilian expedition.

Looking at the larger context may help assess the specific impact attributed to the decision of writing a letter. The act of sending for reinforcements is presented as happening in parallel in both camps. In 7. 7, the narrative focuses on Gylippus' travelling across to Sicily to collect reinforcements and win over new supporters, as well as on the despatching of a group of envoys to Sparta and Corinth to ask for further troops. One of the arguments for the request is that the Athenians too are sending home for fresh troops (7. 7. 3). This prepares the shift of focus to the Athenians' activities in 7. 8, where Nicias notices the movements of the others and decides to send to Athens for reinforcements. The Corinthian and Lacedaemonian requests, entrusted to a group of *presbeis*, are successful; just as successful is the recruiting campaign of Gylippus: we learn in 7. 17–19 that Corinthians, Sicyonians, Lacedaemonians, and the Peloponnesians in general send troops, while Gylippus comes back with 'as large a body of troops as he could secure' from each of the cities he had convinced to join in the fight (7. 21). Nicias' request is basically unsuccessful: the Athenians refuse to recall the army (his first alternative), and they refuse to relieve him from the command of the expedition (7. 16. 1); they do send reinforcements, but do not seem to fully grasp the gravity of the situation, and delay (7. 16. 2–17. 1; 7. 20. 2–3; 7. 31), against Nicias' explicit recommendation (7. 15. 2), causing for instance the loss of Plemmyrion. Strikingly, the possibility of a failure in convincing the Athenians had been anticipated by Nicias:

¹²⁷ Alc. 1. 32: εἰς δὲ τὰ γεγραμμένα κατιδόντας ὥσπερ ἐν κατόπτρῳ θεωρῆσαι τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιδόσεις ῥᾶδιόν ἐστιν. ἔτι δὲ καὶ μνημεῖα καταλιπεῖν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν σπουδάζοντες καὶ τῇ φιλοτιμίᾳ χαριζόμενοι λόγους γράφειν ἐπιχειροῦμεν. The image of the mirror appears also in discussions of epistolary writing, adapted to the context.

¹²⁸ *Akroasis* (public lecture, hearing), *akribeia* (precision), *terpsis* (pleasure), *akoe* (oral report), *parachrema* (immediate, present, as opposed to lasting) are all present in both Alcidas and Thuc. 1. 22; in a sense, Thucydides' work aims to be that 'mirror' of which Alcidas speaks (Thucydides uses *skopein*, 'examine', 'look into', whereas Alcidas has *katidein* or *theoresai*, with similar meaning).

Dover is certainly right that ‘the whole point of his writing a letter was to disarm any suspicion on the part of the assembly that the messengers were misrepresenting him’.¹²⁹ Yet the solution did not work; and all this ends in emphasizing once again Nicias’ difficult relationship with the soldiers and with the Athenian assembly.¹³⁰

To conclude: the Thucydidean strategy of highlighting Nicias’ decision of sending a letter as a peculiarity, and of omitting any mention of a discussion of the contents of that same letter in the assembly,¹³¹ aims at bringing to the fore a complex set of meanings. Technically, the device of the letter offers Thucydides the possibility of giving Nicias one last speech in front of the Athenian assembly. At an overt level, the choice of a letter allows for an explicit reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of this new form of official communication (the ‘discovery’); Nicias’ decision to settle for the—ultimately unsuccessful—*aletheia* also serves to characterize his generalship. Implicitly, the juxtaposition of the unsuccessful choice by Nicias of sending a letter and of the Syracusans’ traditional—and successful—practice of sending envoys may hint at the unsuitability of letters for official communication, when decisions by the assembly are involved.

The numerous references to letters in book 8 mostly reinforce the notion of the unsuitability of letters for official communication. In no case is the text of the letter quoted; in most instances Thucydides briefly summarizes the content of the message, with words implying the use of writing (although this is not always clear when the term used is a form of *ἐπιστέλλω*). The series begins with an instance of communication among two Spartan generals on the war front. The letter (? *ἐλθοῦσης . . . ὑπὸ νύκτα ἐπιστολῆς*, where *epistole* might also mean simply ‘message’) of the commander Pedaritus to the navarch Astyochus (8. 33. 3) fittingly arrives during the night and contains information about the vague possibility that some Erythraeans who have escaped from Samos might be intending to betray Erythrae to the Athenians; upon investigation, the Spartan generals find that the story of the Erythraeans’ willingness to betray the city had been invented by them to get away from Samos in the first place.¹³² The second letter is an instance of communication between the general and the Spartan authorities at home (Thuc. 8. 38. 4, *ἐπιστέλλει περὶ αὐτοῦ ἐς τὴν Λακεδαίμονα ὁ Πεδάριτος*): the same Pedaritus now accuses his colleague Astyochus; we learn slightly later that the letter accomplished its purpose, and that because of Pedaritus’ letter the Spartans held Astyochus in suspicion (8. 39. 2: *πρὸς γὰρ τὰς τοῦ Πεδάριτου ἐπιστολὰς ὑπώπτευνον αὐτόν*).¹³³ A third letter, whose content is briefly

¹²⁹ Dover in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970: 385.

¹³⁰ Corcella 1996: 354. This aspect of Nicias’ personality is also highlighted by Plutarch *Nic* 2.3–6.2 (esp. 5.2 for the connection with writing).

¹³¹ Excellent discussion in Hornblower 2008: 568–9. Actually, the proceedings are extremely compressed: the first meeting with the *boule* all but disappears.

¹³² Good analysis in Hornblower 2008: 844–6, who highlights the fact that it is impossible to know whether those duped are finally the Spartans or the Athenians. But his comment (Hornblower 2008: 844) that ‘Th. uses the letter which conveyed information to Astyochos as a technique for informing us, the readers, as well’ is slightly off the mark: an oral message would have functioned just as well. I would rather suggest that the choice of a letter (or a messenger) arriving at night, rather than a messenger reporting in face-to-face speech in full daylight, ties in well with the content and outcome of the affair.

¹³³ See Hornblower 2008: 844 and 861–3 for comments on Pedaritus’ activity as letter writer. The plural *ἐπιστολὰς* need not imply more than one letter, although, as Hornblower notes, in 8. 33. 3, 7. 8. 2 and 7. 10 Thucydides had used the singular.

summarized by Thucydides, contains an order to Astyochus from the Spartan authorities at home (*ἐπιστολή πρὸς Ἀστύοχον ἐκ Λακεδαιμόνους*) to kill Alcibiades (Thuc. 8. 45. 1).¹³⁴

These exchanges between Spartans are followed by a very close, dramatic succession of four letters, crossing the Aegean between Athenian Samos, the neighbourhood of Miletus, where the Spartan fleet is anchored, and Magnesia, the seat of Tissaphernes. These letters mark a series of astute moves by Phrynichus. The moment is the winter of 412/411, and the Athenian oligarch Phrynichus, ready to do anything to get rid of Alcibiades, hopes to find an ally in the Spartan admiral Astyochus; to him he sends two letters. Astyochus betrays him, however, and reveals the intrigue to Alcibiades, who in turn sends a letter to the Athenians in Samos exposing Phrynichus' dealings with Sparta. But in a final twist, Phrynichus, having learnt of the betrayal, manages to pre-empt the accusation and turns the tables on Alcibiades:¹³⁵

He [Phrynichus] sent a secret letter to the Lacedaemonian admiral, Astyochus, who was still in the neighbourhood of Miletus, to tell him that Alcibiades was ruining their cause by making Tissaphernes the friend of the Athenians, and containing an express revelation of the rest of the intrigue (*πέμπει . . . κρύφα ἐπιστείλας ὅτι Ἀλκιβιάδης . . . καὶ τὰλλα πάντα σαφῶς ἐγγράψας*), desiring to be excused if he sought to harm his enemy, even at the expense of the interests of his country. [3] However, Astyochus, instead of thinking of punishing Alcibiades, who, besides, no longer ventured within his reach as formerly, went up to him and Tissaphernes at Magnesia, communicated to them the letter from Samos, and turned informer (*λέγει τε αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπισταλόντα ἐκ τῆς Σάμου καὶ γίγνεται αὐτὸς μηνυτής*), and if report may be trusted, became the paid creature of Tissaphernes, undertaking to inform him as to this and all other matters; which was also the reason why he did not remonstrate more strongly against the pay not being given in full. [4] Upon this Alcibiades instantly sent to the authorities at Samos a letter against Phrynichus (*ὁ δὲ Ἀλκιβιάδης εὐθὺς πέμπει κατὰ Φρυνίχου γράμματα ἐς τὴν Σάμον*), stating what he had done, and requiring that he should be put to death. [5] Phrynichus, distracted and placed in the utmost peril by the denunciation, sent again to Astyochus (*ἀποστέλλει αὐθις πρὸς τὸν Ἀστύοχον*), reproaching him with having kept the secret of his previous letter so badly, and saying that he was now prepared to give them an opportunity of destroying the whole Athenian armament at Samos. He provided a detailed account (*γράφας καθ' ἑκάστα*) of the means which he should employ, Samos being unfortified, and pleaded that being in danger of his life on their account, he could not now be blamed for doing this or anything else to

¹³⁴ This is a rather problematic document: cf. Andrewes, in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1981: 95–6. This letter and the ones mentioned in 8. 50–1 are part of a narrative section (probably extending from 8. 36 to 8. 54, although other views have been held) that jumps back in time; more importantly, it is placed at the beginning of a new style of narration that gives more place to authorial statements on motives and detailed psychological analysis. For guidance on the problems posed by this part of Thucydides' work see Hornblower 2008: 883–6; Rood 1998: 262–8.

¹³⁵ See Hornblower 2008: 901–7 for a brilliant interpretation of these chapters, labelled by him 'the game of chess'. In Hornblower's view, Phrynichus would have been one step ahead throughout the affair; his profession of treachery in the first letter would only have been a trick to deceive Astyochus into believing the allegations against Alcibiades. This may have been so. And yet, this might not be what Thucydides meant to convey: the wording in 8. 50. 5 points to something more than just 'plan A having gone awry, Phrynichus moved to plan B'. But definitely we are in the narrative category of the 'clever trick', for whose language in Thucydides see the excellent remarks of Hornblower 2008: 105–7 and 901–3.

escape being destroyed by his mortal enemies. This Astyochus also revealed to Alcibiades. 51. Meanwhile Phrynichus, having had timely notice that he was playing him false and that a letter on the subject was on the point of arriving from Alcibiades (καὶ ὅσον οὐ παροῦσαν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου περὶ τούτων ἐπιστολήν), himself anticipated the news, and told the army that the enemy, seeing that Samos was unfortified and the fleet not all stationed within the harbour, meant to attack the camp; that he could be certain of this intelligence; and that they must fortify Samos as quickly as possible, and generally look to their defences. It will be remembered that he was general, and had himself authority to carry out these measures. [2] Accordingly they addressed themselves to the work of fortification, and Samos was thus fortified sooner than it would otherwise have been. Not long afterwards came the letter from Alcibiades, saying that the army was betrayed by Phrynichus, and the enemy about to attack it (αἱ δὲ παρὰ τοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου ἐπιστολαὶ οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον ἦκον ὅτι προδίδοται τε τὸ στράτευμα ὑπὸ Φρυνίχου καὶ οἱ πολέμιοι μέλλουσιν ἐπιθήσεσθαι). [3] Alcibiades, however, gained no credit, it being thought that he was privy to the enemy's designs, and had tried to fasten them on Phrynichus and because of hatred was making out that he was their accomplice; and consequently, far from hurting him, he rather bore witness to what he had said by this intelligence. (Thuc. 8. 50–1)

These are clearly not official letters. They (and their carriers) seem to cross the Aegean, from one army to the other, with an astonishing ease.¹³⁶ As befits secret letters, their exact content is not given. And the necessity of a letter, instead of entrusting the message to the carrier, is not immediately clear.¹³⁷ One cannot help being struck by the sudden intensification, here as in the first book, of epistolary materials: is it an accident that this happens once the war has moved to Ionia, and once Persia is again one of the main players? It is also intriguing that the group of letters of the eighth book appears (with the exception of the one letter exchanged between Pedaritus and Astyochus) in a section of book 8 that goes backwards in time, as if the intricacies of the narrative structure matched the intricacies of the uses of communication.¹³⁸ Finally, the eighth book presents an ensemble of narrative characteristics that can be related to each other: it lacks direct speeches; it is among those books that make most use of 'documents', transcribing them directly into the text; and epistolary communication is mentioned rather frequently, more than anywhere else in the *War*, exception being made for the excursus in book 1.¹³⁹ These aspects have often been interpreted along the analytic-versus-unitarian divide; but these three peculiarities may also be viewed as strategies tending to highlight, towards the end of the war, the move away from

¹³⁶ Andrewes (in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1981: 120) notes: 'it must be assumed that secret communication of this kind was common (cf. Nicias at 7. 48. 2 and elsewhere) and that commanders were felt to have some discretion in what they did or did not reveal'—but the point is that these are secret communications, and that while this kind of contact must have been indeed relatively frequent, it could not be brought into the open.

¹³⁷ Hornblower 2008: 906 refers to Schindel 1970: 289 for a comparison of this letter with the letter [sic] of Themistocles in Hdt. 8. 75. 2–3. Schindel offers an excellent treatment of the affair—and makes it clear that he is comparing Phrynichus' letters (whose written status is signalled by the use of various forms of *γράφω*) to the *oral* message sent by Themistocles to Xerxes before Salamis, in Hdt. 8. 75, which was a trick to force the Persians into battle. Once again, oral and written messages can share characteristics of secrecy and intrigue: it is epistolary writing, and not writing as such, that is problematic.

¹³⁸ On the structuring of the narrative in this part of book 8, see Rood 1998: 262–71.

¹³⁹ See Andrewes and Dover (in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1981: 382–3 and 389–93).

face-to-face discussion, the reliance on treaties and agreements that appear solid (and are 'solidly' quoted) but that systematically fail and have to be redrafted, and the dependence on means of communication that favour secrecy and trouble-making over direct interaction.¹⁴⁰ In this case, the excursus of book 1 would take on an added meaning: the narrative of the fall of the two leading politicians of Athens and Sparta, just after the Persian wars, involved private communications through letters, prefiguring the ample use of letters for irregular communications made by the leading new politicians of Athens and Sparta when the war will escalate—and prefiguring their end as well.

However this may be, the only cases of official letters in Thucydides are the intercepted letter of the Great King to the Spartans, the letter of Nicias to the Athenians, and the three messages exchanged between Spartan officials. Letters were the normal means of communication employed by the Persian kings. The reasons for having Nicias send a letter have been discussed. The existence of letters from Spartans is not surprising (as we shall see better later on), nor is it isolated: Sparta seems to have made a relatively abundant use of epistolary communication, and the ancient tradition bears witness to this. The other letters mentioned by Thucydides are all instances of personal correspondence by which the sender passes on sensitive material in a secretive fashion. Of course, if the existence of these letters is known to the audience of the *War*, it is because they failed in their purpose and became public—or because they succeeded in making false information public.¹⁴¹

Clearly, Thucydides is interested in this type of document. The reason for his interest may be that the letters (in theory) offered the possibility of reaching directly into the thoughts of the protagonists, without any mediation;¹⁴² but letters are definitely also one of the means by which he characterizes individuals, as well as the changing policies developing in the course of the Peloponnesian war.

4.3. INTO THE FOURTH CENTURY: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The activity of the two historians to be discussed next spans the first half of the fourth century: if there is any truth in the claim that Ctesias was present at Cunaxa in the entourage of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (Plut. *Artax.* 11, cf. Xen. *Anab.* 1. 8. 25), then Xenophon and Ctesias were contemporaries. In Xenophon's *Hellenica*, which continues Thucydides' *War*, letters seem to follow the Thucydidean pattern; but the works on Persia and the *Agésilas* offer a glimpse of a new, different vision of letter writing. Similarly, Ctesias mentioned in his work epistolary

¹⁴⁰ For this function of documents in the period of the uneasy peace (as well as later), cf. Connor 1984: 144–7; Hornblower 1996: 116–17 and 360. Bearzot 2003: 278 considers that the difficulty of explaining a complex and changing situation would have pushed Thucydides into inserting documents. The two explanations are not mutually exclusive.

¹⁴¹ On this see Longo 1978: 530–1; Harris 1989: 88 (and 128 for the presence of similar aspects in Polybius); Steiner 1994: 221–2; Rosenmeyer 2001: 56–7.

¹⁴² So Bearzot 2003: 288.

exchanges between Persians and Greeks, Athenians and Spartans, in the context of the power struggle in the Aegean; but he also presents us with the first instance of a suicide-note-cum-love-letter.

4.3.1. Xenophon

Xenophon's work preserves some examples of official letters from generals to their polis. Their relatively small number (altogether, eleven instances of epistolary exchanges—although of course the term *ἐπιστολή* appears more often) has to be seen against the background of a general scarcity of official documents.¹⁴³ As had been the case with Thucydides, these letters concern only Sparta, Athens, and Persia. I shall discuss first the references to letters in the *Hellenica* and then those present in other works. I shall close by comparing my findings concerning letters with the presence of (and references to) other documents and written texts in Xenophon's oeuvre.¹⁴⁴

The first letter in the *Hellenica*, a famous example of epistolary Laconism, was sent by the second in command Hippocrates to the ephors after the naval disaster at Cyzicus in 410; it was intercepted by the Athenians, which is why Xenophon can quote its text:

Ἐρρει τὰ κᾶλα. Μίνδαρος ἀπεσσύα. πεινῶντι τῶνδρες. ἀπορίομες τί χρὴ δρᾶν.
(*Hell.* 1. 1. 23)

The ships are gone. Mindarus is dead. The men are starving. We know not what to do.

It does not add much to the narrative, and its inclusion may have been due to rhetorical factors: besides being a nice example of the Laconian style, it expresses the Spartans' feelings after the disaster at Cyzicus as no other comment could possibly have done.

Writing also plays a role in the way the ephors deal with Cinadon's conspiracy (*Hell.* 3. 3. 8–11) in what appears to be an interesting variant of the death-bringing letter: when they learn about the plans for a revolt, the ephors call Cinadon and send him to Aulon with orders to arrest and bring back all those of the Aulonians and Helots whose names are written on the official letter (*ἄγοντα τῶν Αὐλωνιτῶν τέ τινας καὶ τῶν εἰλώτων τοὺς ἐν τῇ σκυτάλῃ γεγραμμένους*, *Hell.* 3. 3. 8). To accomplish this duty, some *neoi* ('young men') have been selected to accompany him. However, the *neoi* have been previously informed that it is Cinadon they must arrest, once out of the city, and that after learning from him the names of his associates in the revolt, they must write them down and send them back to the ephors (*τοὺς δὲ συνειδότας πυθόμενοι αὐτοῦ γράψαντες ἀποπέμπειν τὴν ταχίστην*

¹⁴³ Only two instances of inscriptions: the stele at Scillus, *Anab.* 5. 3. 13, on the plot dedicated to Artemis by Xenophon himself, bearing a text typical of sacred regulations; and *Xen. Cyr.* 7. 3. 15, the stele of the eunuchs (*καὶ νῦν τὸ μνήμα μέχρι τοῦ νῦν τῶν εὐνούχων κεχώσθαι λέγεται· καὶ ἐπὶ μὲν τῇ ἄνω στήλῃ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς ἐπιγεγράφθαι φασὶ τὰ ὀνόματα, Σῦρία γράμματα, κάτω δὲ εἶναι τρεῖς λέγουσι στήλας καὶ ἐπιγεγράφθαι ΣΚΗΠΤΟΥΧΩΝ*). Neither of these can be considered an 'official document'.

¹⁴⁴ More details in Orsi 2002, who offers an extremely detailed discussion of the diplomatic vocabulary of Xenophon, in particular in the area of international communications.

τοῖς ἐφόροις, *Hell.* 3. 3. 10). The first official message is thus a fictive one, but the second one, with the names of the accomplices, is a very real one: a horseman returns with the names listed by Cinadon (ἦκεν ἱππεὺς φέρων τὰ ὀνόματα ὧν ὁ Κινάδων ἀπέγραψε) and the most influential associates are immediately arrested. Writing here serves the purpose of credibly sending Cinadon away from Sparta, allowing for the arrest to succeed, and the names of the associates to be extorted without any danger of their learning that Cinadon has been arrested; the real negotiations (how to best deal with the threat, and which men to send with Cinadon) are conducted through private conversations.

As for Athens, Xenophon records the message sent to the boule and the people by the *stratēgoi* after the battle of the Arginusae in 406 BC: it plays an important role in Xenophon's narrative of their trial, both in the accusations levelled at them and in their defence. Theramenes and others produced their dispatch (ἐπιστολή) in the assembly, and made much of the fact that the only reason given in it for not collecting the shipwrecked had been the storm; they took this to mean that the responsibility had been that of the generals only.¹⁴⁵ In his turn, Euryptolemus affirmed in his speech for the defence that Pericles and Diomedon 'persuaded their colleagues to change their mind when they wanted to send a letter to the boule and to you, stating that they had assigned to Theramenes and Thrasybulus the duty of picking up the shipwrecked with forty-seven triremes, and that they failed to pick them up'.¹⁴⁶ The dispatch had thus been discussed among the generals and a first version drafted, which was subsequently discarded in favour of the one blaming the failure simply on the storm. This is the only reference to an Athenian letter in Xenophon's oeuvre. One should note that it is successfully used in the assembly for a political purpose: the destruction of those who had sent it.

Other reports of letters include some Persian ones. Xenophon 'quotes' a part of the text of the letter bearing the royal seal that Cyrus brought along to prove his nomination to *karanos* ('supreme military commander') in 407 BC:

... καὶ Κύρος, ἄρξων πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ καὶ συμπολεμήσων Λακεδαιμονίοις, ἐπιστολὴν τε ἔφερε τοῖς κάτω πᾶσι τὸ βασιλεῖον σφράγισμα ἔχουσαν, ἐν ᾗ ἐνὴν καὶ τάδε: Καταπέμψω Κύρον κάρανον τῶν εἰς Καστωλὸν ἀθροιζομένων. τὸ δὲ κάρανον ἔστι κύριον. (*Xen. Hell.* 1. 4. 3).

(the ambassadors met also with) Cyrus, who was to take command of all the peoples on the coast and to support the Lacedaemonians in the war; he carried a letter, addressed to all the inhabitants of the coastal area and bearing the King's seal, which contained among other things these words: 'I send Cyrus as *karanos* of those who are mustering in Castolus.' *Karanos* means 'lord'.

The term *epistole* is not used elsewhere in the *Hellenica*, but there are a number of references to *grammata*, 'writings' of the King, spelling out the terms of the Peace of 387/386 and the later Peace of 367/366. The text of the King's Peace of 387/386 (referred to as τὰ γεγραμμένα by the narrator in 5. 1. 30, and as τὰ

¹⁴⁵ *Xen. Hell.* 1. 7. 4: ἐπιστολὴν ἐπεδείκνυε μαρτύριον ἦν ἔπειψαν οἱ στρατηγοὶ εἰς τὴν βουλὴν καὶ εἰς τὸν δῆμον, ἄλλο οὐδὲν αἰτιώμενοι ἢ τὸν χειμῶνα.

¹⁴⁶ *Xen. Hell.* 1. 7. 17: κατηγορῶ μὲν οὖν αὐτῶν ὅτι ἔπεισαν τοὺς συνάρχοντας βουλομένους πέμπειν γράμματα τῇ τε βουλῇ καὶ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐπέταξαν τῷ Θηραμένει καὶ Θρασυβούλῳ τετταράκοντα καὶ ἐπὶ τριήρεσιν ἀνελέσθαι τοὺς ναυαγούς, οἱ δὲ οὐκ ἀνείλοντο.

βασιλέως γράμματα in the words attributed to Agesilaus in 5. 1. 32), begins in Xenophon's version as a rescript from the King, in the third person and without any specific addressees, but then moves to the first person, in other words it 'behaves' exactly as a letter would:

Ἀρταξέρξης βασιλεὺς νομίζει δίκαιον τὰς μὲν ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ πόλεις ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι καὶ τῶν νήσων Κλαζομενὰς καὶ Κύπρον, τὰς δὲ ἄλλας Ἑλληνίδας πόλεις καὶ μικρὰς καὶ μεγάλας αὐτονόμους ἀφείναι πλὴν Δήμου καὶ Ἴμβρου καὶ Σκύρου: ταύτας δὲ ὥσπερ τὸ ἀρχαῖον εἶναι Ἀθηναίων. ὁπότεροι δὲ ταύτην τὴν εἰρήνην μὴ δέχονται, τούτοις ἐγὼ πολεμήσω μετὰ τῶν ταῦτα βουλομένων καὶ πεζῇ καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν καὶ ναυσὶ καὶ χρήμασιν.

(Xen. *Hell.* 5. 1. 31)

'King Artaxerxes thinks it just that the cities in Asia should belong to him, as well as Clazomenae and Cyprus among the islands, and that the other Greek cities, both small and great, should be left independent, except Lemnos, Imbros, and Scyros; and these should belong, as of old, to the Athenians. But whichever of the two parties does not accept this peace, upon them I will make war, together with those who desire this arrangement, both by land and by sea with ships and with money.'

(Trans. Brownson 1918)

Importantly, before reading the text to the assembled Greeks Tiribazus had shown them the King's seal (τὰ βασιλέως σημεία, 5. 1. 30), just as the King's seal had been an essential part of the letter giving authority to Cyrus. The language attributed by Xenophon to Tiribazus is also noteworthy: the satrap orders that those who are interested in hearing 'the peace that the king has sent' should be present (παρεῖναι τοὺς βουλομένους ὑπακοῦσαι ἣν βασιλεὺς εἰρήνην καταπέμποι, Xen. *Hell.* 5. 1. 30): the 'peace' is sent as a letter. As Dillery notes, this is basically 'the only document that Xenophon purports to quote in the *Hellenica*'.¹⁴⁷ Xenophon's is the fullest surviving treatment of the peace, yet this is probably not a literal quotation. He may have preserved the preamble, or the gist of the edict, but the full official text of the document must have contained further specific clauses.¹⁴⁸ However, Badian has convincingly argued that the wording reflects very closely Persian ideology on the one hand (e.g. the use of *νομίζω δίκαιον*—this is an edict, and it rests on the 'justice' of the Persian king; note *νομίζω* rather than *λέγω* or indeed the *δοκέω* found in Athenian decrees) and on the other Spartan phraseology (e.g. the formula *πόλεις καὶ μικρὰς καὶ μεγάλας*, part of the traditional formulary of Spartan diplomacy, at least in the versions preserved by Xenophon and Thucydides).¹⁴⁹ The framing of the document, which is halfway

¹⁴⁷ Dillery 1995: 201. There are some exceptions though: the letter sent by Hippocrates at Sparta, Xen. *Hell.* 1. 1. 23 (above); the one nominating Cyrus (above); other exceptions are listed below.

¹⁴⁸ Isocrates states in *Paneg.* 180 and *Panath.* 107 that the text was inscribed throughout Greece. It is unclear to me whether what Xenophon gives is the Greek translation of an official text itself written according to specific indications of the Spartans, or whether there ever only was a Greek text, resulting of the collaboration between Tiribazus and the Spartans; Badian's point (1987, and 1991: 37–9) on the unlikelihood that the King could swear a peace with a Greek city seems to me convincing. See also Dillery 1995: 202 (and Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 20, an alliance between Athens and Chios dated to 384/383, for a mention of the oath of the King, with their commentary); more generally Dillery 1995: 199–207 for the context of the Peace.

¹⁴⁹ Persian formulae: Badian 1987: 27–8; Spartan formulae: Badian 1991: 35–6, with reference to Xen. 5. 2. 35; Thuc. 5. 77. 5, and also 1. 125. 1 (for Badian, Thucydides' reformulation of a Spartan formula).

between an edict and a letter, could perfectly well be the result of the cooperation between the Spartans and the Persians around Tiribazus.

This document is referred to more than once in Xenophon, always as 'the writing' (τὰ γράμματα) of the King: besides the instances seen above, this happens also in the course of the speeches delivered in Sparta in 372/371 BC by the Athenian ambassadors Autocles (*Hell.* 6. 3. 9: κατὰ τὰ βασιλέως γράμματα) and Callistratus (*Hell.* 6. 3. 12): 'For the King wrote that all the cities in Greece should be autonomous', Βασιλεὺς μὲν γὰρ δῆπου ἔγραψε πάσας τὰς ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι πόλεις αὐτονόμους εἶναι.

However, the notional equivalence between *grammata* and *epistole* when talking of a writing by the Persian king addressed to all Greeks is made explicit in the narrative of the Peace that the Thebans tried to impose, with the agreement of the King, in 367 BC; the passage (*Xen. Hell.* 7. 1. 36–9) gives, moreover, a fascinating glimpse into how these texts were constructed (or into how Xenophon imagines these texts were constructed). Pelopidas is first asked by the King's representative what he would like to stand in the text (ὁ τί βούλοιτο ἐαυτῷ γραφῆναι); his conditions (mainly autonomy for Messene) are then written down and read out to the ambassadors (γραφέντων δὲ τούτων καὶ ἀναγνωσθέντων τοῖς πρέσβεσιν), presumably for approval. But at this point, an Athenian ambassador, Leon, makes a disobliging comment in the hearing of the King. As this is translated to the King, the answer again comes in writing: 'And if the Athenians are aware of anything juster than these provisions, let them come to the King and inform him.' (ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀπήγγειλεν ὁ γραμματεὺς ἃ εἶπεν ὁ Ἀθηναῖος, πάλιν ἐξήνεγκε προσγεγραμμένα· εἰ δέ τι δικαιοτέρον τούτων γινώσκουσιν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἰόντας πρὸς βασιλέα διδάσκειν, 7. 1. 37.) Once the agreement has been reached, the Thebans invite all the representatives from the cities to hear the letter of the King (ἀκουσομένων τῆς παρὰ βασιλέως ἐπιστολῆς), and at the meeting the representative of the King shows to all the seal and reads the text (καὶ ὁ Πέρσης ὁ φέρων τὰ γράμματα δείξας τὴν βασιλέως σφραγίδα ἀνέγνω τὰ γεγραμμένα). Communication does indeed happen through writing on the Persians' part.

The rest of Xenophon's oeuvre shows features that correspond to the picture emerging from the analysis of the *Hellenica*. There are quite a few Persian letters, some of them treasonous, others reflecting the normal practices of Persian communication. Among the former is the letter sent by Orontes to the King, an object lesson in the dangers of communication by letters: with it, Orontes proposed to change camp and join the army of the King, reminding the latter of his former friendship and fidelity. Orontes gave it to a man he considered trustworthy; but this person took the letter and handed it directly to Cyrus (*Anab.* 1. 6. 3), with the result that Orontes was condemned to death, utterly disappearing, so that 'no grave of his was ever seen'.

As for the letters exemplifying normal Persian communication, the *Cyropaedia* offers examples pertaining both to official communication (*Cyr.* 4. 5. 26–34, cf. 5. 5. 4; 8. 2. 16–18) and to private, personal exchanges (2. 2. 9–10). Accounting through written lists (γεγραμμένα... ἀκριβῶς, or τὰ γράμματα) is presented as central to the Persian system, as in Croesus' gesture of passing to Cyrus a list of everything that was being transported in each of the wagons leaving Sardis. Cyrus hands over the list to his subordinates, stating that for himself it is enough to trust that those in charge deserve those valuables; but the friends and officers are

requested to exercise control (*Cyr.* 4. 7. 12–13). It is also in the *Cyropaedia* that Xenophon offers a full picture of the Persian postal system (*Cyr.* 8. 6. 17–18): Xenophon is fully aware of the importance of communication for the empire. The fact that written communication is defined a *μηχάνημα* (*Cyr.* 8. 6. 17), a device to cope with the dimension of the empire explains also, *e contrario*, why the Greek poleis never had a postal system, an organized way of transmitting written communications. Yet Xenophon's comment stresses the positive aspects of such a system ('and it is a fine thing to have immediate intelligence of everything, in order to attend to it as quickly as possible', *Cyr.* 8. 6. 18).

On the Greek side, two letters play a role at the beginning and towards the end of Xenophon's personal anabasis. A letter from his friend Proxenus was the reason Xenophon decided to join the expedition, as the reader learns from a famous passage of the *Anabasis* in which, after the generals and commanders of the Greek army have been seized and put to death following Cyrus' defeat, Xenophon introduces himself and his role in the expedition:

There was a man in the army named Xenophon, an Athenian, who was neither general nor captain nor private, but had accompanied the expedition because Proxenus, an old friend of his, had sent him at his home an invitation to go with him... [5] After reading Proxenus' letter (*ἐπιστολή*) Xenophon conferred with Socrates... (*Anab.* 3. 1. 4–5).

Socrates suggested he should consult Delphi before joining the adventure; but the letter had already done its work, and Xenophon asked to what god he should sacrifice in order to accomplish successfully the journey he was contemplating—and not, as Socrates reproached him afterwards, whether he should go or not. A second letter seems to play a role towards the end of the long journey homewards, one given by Anaxibius to Xenophon that should have allowed the army a safe passage from Perinthus (on the European coast of the Propontis) to Asia (*Anab.* 7. 2. 8). This letter will prove in the event useless because of a change in those placed in command.

Finally, there is a unique and very important scene in which the Spartan king Agesilaus refuses to accept a letter. After having stressed the latter's openness, ease of access, and kindness, Xenophon adds that although cheerful and friendly, he could show great dignity (*μεγαλογνωμοσύνη*), and gives this refusal as an instance:

ἐκείνος γὰρ ὅτ' ἦλθεν αὐτῷ ἐπιστολή παρὰ βασιλέως, ἣν ὁ μετὰ Καλλία τοῦ Λακεδαιμονίου Πέρσης ἤνεγκε, περὶ ξενίας τε καὶ φιλίας [αὐτῶ], ταύτην μὲν οὐκ ἔδεξατο, τῷ δὲ φέροντι εἶπεν ἀπαγγεῖλαι βασιλεῖ ὡς ἰδίᾳ μὲν πρὸς αὐτὸν οὐδὲν δέοι ἐπιστολὰς πέμπειν, ἣν δὲ φίλος τῇ Λακεδαίμονι καὶ τῇ Ἑλλάδι εὖνους ὦν φαίνεται, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς φίλος ἀνὰ κράτος αὐτῷ ἔσοιτο· ἣν μέντοι, ἔφη, ἐπιβουλευὼν ἀλίσκηται, μηδ' ἂν πάνυ πολλὰς ἐπιστολὰς δέχωμαι, φίλον ἔξειν με οἰέσθω. (*Ages.* 8. 3)

Thus, when the Persian envoy who came with Callias the Lacedaemonian handed him a letter from the King containing offers of friendship and hospitality, he declined to accept it, and said to the bearer that he should tell the King that there was no need for him to send him private letters, but, if he gave proof of friendship for Lacedaemon and goodwill towards Greece, he too for his part would be his friend with all his heart. 'But', he said, 'if he is found plotting, let him not hope to have a friend in me, however many letters I may receive.' (Trans. Marchant, slightly modified)

This is a fascinating passage, bringing out well the distinction between public position and personal epistolary communication. That it should be a Spartan who points out this distinction is paradoxical, but then Agesilaus (and especially Xenophon's Agesilaus) is in many ways a paradoxical Spartan.

It would seem thus that the Greek historians of the fifth and early fourth century (down to and including Xenophon) connect epistolary writing rather closely with a despotic or oriental milieu by underlining the connotations of privateness and individuality of the letter. There are in Thucydides and Xenophon some instances of official letters, but they are still fairly rare. That this is not something historiographical, but is due to the infrequent use of letters for official communication in reality is shown in my opinion by the fact that these few letters do not yet present a fully developed formulary, either for the introduction or for the conclusion, and even more by the fact that until the end of the fifth century there is not a term that unequivocally denotes a 'letter'.¹⁵⁰ This does not of course mean that the Greeks by the end of the fifth century did not exchange letters: rather, in the context of a more general tendency to avoid or mention with a certain economy documents and decrees, that is, to avoid the intrusion of 'other' writing into one's work, the infrequent references to letters must be interpreted as part of a strategy aimed at defining and characterizing in particular ways those individuals that choose letters as their instrument of communication. This also explains why, in Herodotus as in Thucydides and Xenophon, the content of most letters is simply summarized (or plainly rewritten): documentary precision does not play a role here.

4.3.2. Ctesias

Of Ctesias' *Persica* we have only the summary of Photius, and, with some notable exceptions, fragments (not clearly marked as such) transmitted through indirect tradition (mainly Diodorus Siculus and Plutarch, but also Nicolaus of Damascus and Athenaeus). It is thus very difficult to give a just appraisal of his work.¹⁵¹ Even in such a situation, some aspects emerge clearly. In particular, it is evident that writing and written documents (whether real or invented is for the moment irrelevant) played an important role in his work and in how he presented it. Photius' summary makes it clear that Ctesias pretended to have been present at most of the events narrated, or, where this was impossible, to have learnt about them from Persian sources.¹⁵² This is supported by other passages of Ctesias'

¹⁵⁰ See above, ch. 1. 4, and esp. 17–18.

¹⁵¹ Among recent work, see Drews 1973: 103–16; Dorati 1995; Lenfant 2004; Tuplin 2004; Stronk 2007.

¹⁵² T 8 Lenfant = *FGrH* 688 T 8 = Phot. *Bibl.* 72. 35b 35: *φησὶ δὲ αὐτὸν τῶν πλείονων ἃ ἱστορεῖ αὐτόπτην γενόμενον ἢ παρ' αὐτῶν Περσῶν, ἔνθα τὸ ὄραν μὴ ἐνεχάσκει, αὐτήκοον καταστάνα, οὕτω τὴν ἱστορίαν συγγράφει.* On Ctesias' stress on personal observation or personal hearing, which he contrasted with Herodotus' supposed failings, see Marincola 1997: 227–8; detailed discussion of Ctesias' sources and of his way of presenting them in Lenfant 2004: xxvii–xxxix. Regarding the degree of correspondence to reality of Ctesias' account, I tend to side with the sceptics (Jacoby's position is nowadays less well represented than it was, but see e.g. Dorati 1995; Binder 2008: 55–7); for a more optimistic view, see e.g. Lenfant 2004; Stronk 2007. While making a case for the existence of Persian archives, even Stronk has to admit that the type of stories narrated by Ctesias would not have been

work: the following statement, preserved by Diodorus (2. 32. 4), probably stood in the proem of Ctesias' work.¹⁵³

Κτησίας δ' ὁ Κνίδιος τοῖς μὲν χρόνοις ὑπῆρξε κατὰ τὴν Κύρου στρατεῖαν ἐπὶ Ἀρταξέρξην τὸν ἀδελφόν, γενόμενος δ' αἰχμάλωτος καὶ διὰ τὴν ἰατρικὴν ἐπιστήμην ἀναληφθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως, ἑπτακαίδεκα ἔτη διετέλεσε τιμώμενος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. οὗτος οὖν φησιν ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν διφθερῶν, ἐν αἷς οἱ Πέρσαι τὰς παλαιὰς πράξεις κατὰ τινὰ νόμον εἶχον συντεταγμένας, πολυπραγμονῆσαι τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον, καὶ συνταξάμενος τὴν ἱστορίαν εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐξενεγκεῖν. (F 5 Lenfant = FGrH 688 F 5)

Ctesias of Cnidus, on the other hand, lived during the time when Cyrus made his expedition against Artaxerxes his brother, and having been made prisoner and then retained by Artaxerxes because of his medical knowledge, he enjoyed a position of honour with him for seventeen years. Now Ctesias says that from the royal records, in which the Persians in accordance with a certain law of theirs kept an account of their ancient affairs, he carefully investigated the facts about each king, and when he had composed his history he published it among the Greeks.

Ctesias thus claimed to have made use of *basilikai diphtherai* for his work, which he consulted at the time of his stay at the Persian court. Similarly, when narrating accounts of the earliest kings of Assyria in his second book, he asserted that the Memnon sent as an ally to the Trojans was the son of Tithonos, an *eparchos* of Persis, and added that 'The barbarians say that this is what is told of Memnon in the royal texts', *περὶ μὲν οὖν Μέμνονος τοιαύτ' ἐν ταῖς βασιλικαῖς ἀναγραφαῖς ἱστορεῖσθαι φασιν οἱ βάρβαροι* (F 1b Lenfant = FGrH 688 F1b = D. S. 2. 22. 5). The meagre fragments we have show that Ctesias quoted inscriptions: his version of the Behistun inscriptions, which he attributed to Semiramis, is a memorable instance—but ludicrous might be a more appropriate epithet in this case. According to Ctesias, the queen having smoothed out the cliff wrote on it in Syrian letters: 'Semiramis, with the pack-saddles of the beasts of burden in her army, built up a mound from the plain and thereby climbed this precipice, even to this very ridge' (F 1b Lenfant = FGrH F1b = D. S. 2. 13. 2). Again, one cannot but admire Ctesias' ingenuity when, in citing a Greek epigram four hexameters in length to prove his point on Sardanapalus and his inclinations towards pleasure, he adds that this was originally in Barbarian language, and was only later translated into Greek (FGrH 688 F1b = D. S. 2. 23. 3). Interestingly, this is in tune with Xenophon's use of inscriptions: he cited only two, but of these one, from the *Anabasis*, was a dedication; the other one, from the *Cyropaedia*, concerned eunuchs (and was written in Syrian letters).¹⁵⁴

With Ctesias, thus, we are dealing with an author extremely conscious of the power of writing to attest the truthfulness or enhance the reliability of any statement; and not only that, but also an author who can consciously manipulate

recorded there. And when he settles for Ctesias as a writer of historical fiction (see esp. 49–50), he is basically endorsing the judgements of Wilamowitz and Jacoby (respectively 'Er hat den ersten historischen Roman geschrieben' and 'Vater des historischen Romans'), as cited by Stronk himself (2007: 48 n. 94).

¹⁵³ See Tuplin 2004: 307, who thinks of this as an intermediate preface.

¹⁵⁴ See above, n. 143. The Ctesian paternity of the epigram is doubted by Jacoby, who prints this part of Diodorus in small characters and notes in apparatus: 'From Cleitarchus?'; Lenfant 2004 does not print this at all; but see Drews 1970; Walbank 1967: 83–5 ('perhaps from Ctesias'); Weißbach 1920: 2441.

his writing.¹⁵⁵ This attention to writing played a role beyond the part of his work concerning the earliest times and the oriental world: the summary of Photius as well as some scanty fragments show that even when discussing more recent times, and in situations where he could have relied on personal observation, he used a good deal of epistolary material, even presenting himself as personally involved in epistolary dealings. Photius, in summarizing the more recent part of Ctesias' *Persica* (books 21, 22, and 23), states that in it were narrated

causes of the quarrel of king Artaxerxes with Evagoras, king of Salamis (αἰτίαι δι' αἷς Εὐαγόρα βασιλεῖ Σαλαμίνος βασιλεὺς Ἀρτοξέρξης διηνέχθη); and messengers (ἄγγελοι) sent by Evagoras to Ctesias about the receiving of letters from Abuletes (ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαβεῖν παρὰ Ἀβουλίτου τὰς ἐπιστολάς); and a letter (ἐπιστολή) of Ctesias to Evagoras concerning reconciliation with Anaxagoras, king of the Cypriots. Return of the messengers (ἄγγελων) of Evagoras to Cyprus and delivery of the letters (γραμμάτων ἀπόδοσις) from Ctesias to Evagoras. 73. And a speech (λόγος) of Conon to Evagoras about visiting the king; and a letter (ἐπιστολή) of Evagoras on the honours he had received from him. And a letter (ἐπιστολή) of Conon to Ctesias; an agreement of Evagoras to pay tribute to the king; and the delivery of the letters (τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόδοσις) to Ctesias. A speech (λόγος) of Ctesias to the king about Conon; and a letter (ἐπιστολή) to him. Delivery to Satibarzanes of the presents sent by Evagoras; arrival of the messengers (τῶν ἀγγέλων) in Cyprus. Letter (ἐπιστολή) of Conon to the King and Ctesias. 74. Detention of the Spartan ambassadors (ἄγγελοι) to the king. A letter (ἐπιστολή) from the king to Conon and the Spartans, delivered to them by Ctesias himself (ἃς Κτησίας αὐτὸς ἐκόμισεν). Conon appointed commander of the fleet by Pharnabazus. Visit of Ctesias to Cnidus, his native city, and to Sparta. Proceedings against the Spartan ambassadors (ἄγγελους) at Rhodes, and their acquittal. Numbers of stations, days, and parasangs from Ephesus to Bactria and India. Catalogue of kings from Ninos and Semiramis to Artaxerxes. And here is the end.

(Lenfant F 27 = FGrH 688 F 27 = Phot. Bibl. 72. 44 b20—45 aa)

The loss of Ctesias' work is regrettable for a number of reasons; but even such a bare summary makes it clear that the letters were central to the construction of his very last books: they seem to have been the nucleus around which the events were organized. That Ctesias did not limit himself to playing the role of innocent messenger is shown from another passage, which gives another glimpse of how affairs were conducted in the Aegean at the beginning of the fourth century. Plutarch in his *Life of Artaxerxes* (21. 2–4) asserts that for his projects to succeed, Conon realized that he needed power (δύναμις), and that the King needed an able man (ἀνὴρ ἔμφορος). Conon thus sent a letter to the King (ἔπεμψεν ἐπιστολήν). Moreover, he suggested that the carrier transmit it, if at all possible, through Zeno of Crete or through Polycritus of Mende, the first a dancer, the second a physician; but if these were not present, through Ctesias the physician. At this point, things become more complex:

λέγεται δ' ὁ Κτησίας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν λαβὼν παρεγγράφαι τοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ Κόνωνος ἐπεσταλμένοις, ὅπως καὶ Κτησίαν ἀποστείλῃ πρὸς αὐτόν, ὡς ὠφέλιμον ὄντα ταῖς ἐπὶ θαλάσῃ πράξεσιν. ὁ δὲ Κτησίας αὐτὸν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ βασιλεία φησὶ προσθεῖναι τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῷ ταύτην.

(Plut. Art. 21. 4 = T 7d and F 32 Lenfant = FGrH 688 T 7d and F 32)

¹⁵⁵ Ctesias and writing: Tuplin 2007: 307–10.

And it is said that Ctesias, on receiving the letter, added to the suggestions which Conon made to the king a request to send Ctesias also to him, as likely to be of service in matters on the sea coast. Ctesias, however, says that the king of his own accord conferred upon him this new duty.

Ctesias is here presented as not having been content with the simple addition of an oral message to the letter of Conon; it is claimed that in order to convey the impression that the request had come from Conon himself, he added a few words to the letter. Unluckily, we are not in a position to know who exactly it was that accused Ctesias of having tampered with the text of the letter, and whether this was external information, or information deduced from Ctesias' own work; the hypothesis that here Plutarch depends on Dinon's account, who would have relied for his accusation on Ctesian materials, has much in its favour.¹⁵⁶ Whether there may be some reality in the role that Ctesias attributed to himself in these events or not, the insistence on letters demands our attention: especially if the part he claimed to play did not really correspond to his actual impact on the diplomatic negotiations, Ctesias would not have mentioned documents that rendered his account less plausible—quite to the contrary, in fact. Letters would have been the perfect document: written; but not kept and not official.

Letters thus were significant in recent history as recounted by Ctesias, and probably also in reality; they are present also in the narrative of more ancient periods, as Ctesias' fragments show. The Indian king Staurobates sends, for instance, a letter full of insults to Semiramis, who simply laughs when she reads it (F 1b Lenfant = *FGrH* 688 F 1b = D. S. 2. 18. 1–2); a Mede, hearing by accident the treacherous plans being hatched by the sons of Semiramis and a eunuch, writes them down on a piece of parchment and passes the message to Semiramis herself (γράφας ἅπαν εἰς διφθέραν Σεμιράμει πέμπει διὰ τινος, F11d Lenfant = Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F 1); in the story of the love affair between Teritouchmes and Roxane, letters of the king play a role in deciding Oudiastes to intervene and save Amestris, the king's daughter, wife of Teritouchmes (Lenfant F 15 = *FGrH* 688 F 15 = Phot. *Bibl.* 72. 43a 17–28).

But the most important instance of a letter, the only one for which we have the text *in extenso*, is that mentioned in the context of the love-story between Stryangaeus and Zarinaea.¹⁵⁷ Zarinaea, the queen of the Sacae, falls from her horse in battle, and the Mede Stryangaeus, although her enemy, spares her life. Later, Stryangaeus is taken prisoner by the queen's husband; Zarinaea asks for his life, since he saved her, but the King refuses; she then kills her husband and frees the Mede. Meanwhile, he has fallen in love with her; but she rejects him, ostensibly on the grounds that he is already married. Stryangaeus decides then to commit suicide, but before doing so, writes her a letter. Besides the version of the story by Nicolaus of Damascus (Lenfant F 8c* = *FGrH* 90 F 5), a papyrus probably

¹⁵⁶ Dorati 1995: 45, with earlier bibliography in n. 56; see also the careful analysis by Lenfant (2004: xi–xv and xix–xxii) of Ctesias' diplomatic activity; and Binder 2008: 284–6 and 288–90.

¹⁵⁷ Background and full discussion of the various sources for the affair in Gera 1997: 84–100; Gera sensibly concludes that even if one can vaguely reconstruct the overall historical context, 'the chief figures in our story—Cydraeus, Mermerus, Astibaras, Stryangaeus and, of course, Zarinaea—are unknown outside the *Persica* (or later sources dependent upon that work) and there is no evidence that Ctesias' characters ever existed' (88).

preserves Ctesias' own text of this letter, so famous that Demetrius, in the treatise *De elocutione*, cited one sentence of it: 'I saved you, and you were saved by me, and yet I perish because of you' (ἐγὼ μὲν σέ ἔσωσα, καὶ σὺ μὲν δι' ἐμέ ἐσώθης, ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ σέ ἀπωλόμην, *De elocut.* 213).¹⁵⁸

The papyrus begins with a conversation between two men: Stryangaeus (as is clear from the text following) and possibly a eunuch. From Nicolaus' version, we learn that having written his letter on a *diphthera*, a parchment, Stryangaeus has the eunuch swear that he will give the *diphthera* to Zarinaea, once Stryangaeus is dead, without mentioning his suicide; this request is not in the preserved part of the papyrus, but it might have come either earlier or after the letter.¹⁵⁹

[.]α. σ. [.]λ.ε. απαγψ. τες δ' ἐ[σ]- | τιν ὅτι ἄγος ἐνέλειπες. ὁ δ' εἰ- | πεν. φέρε τὸ γοῦν
πρῶτον | [γ]ράμματ[α] [γ]ράψω πρὸς Ζαρει- | ναίαν. καὶ γράφει. Στρναγ- | χαίος
Ζαρ[ε]ν[α]ίαι οὕτω λέγειν. | ἐγὼ μὲν σέ ἔσωσα, καὶ σὺ δι' ἐ- | μέ ἐσ[ώ]θης, ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ
σέ ἀπ[ω]λόμην, καὶ ἀπέκτεινα | αὐτὸς ἐμαυτόν. οὐ γάρ μοι σὺ ἐ- | βούλου χαρ[ί]σασθαι.
ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦ- | τα τὰ κακὰ καὶ τὸν ἔρωτα τόν | θε οὐκ αὐτὸς εἰλόμην, ἀλλὰ | με ἔρωσ
ἀπώλεσεν. ὁ δὲ θεὸς | οὐτό[σ] ἐστιν κοινὸς καὶ σοὶ καὶ | ἅπανσιν ἀνθρώποισιν. ὅτ[ι] μὲν
οὖν εἴλεως ἔλθῃ, πλεί- | στας γὰρ ἡδονὰς δίδωσιν, καὶ ἄλ- | λα πλείστα ἀγαθὰ ἐποίησεν
αὐ- | τόν, ὅταν δὲ ὀργιζόμενος | ἔλθῃ<ι> ο[ἱ]ον[περ] ἐμοὶ νῦν, πλεί- | στα κ[ακὰ]
ἐρ[γ]ασάμενος τὸ τελευ- | ταῖον πρόρριζον ἀπώλεσεν | καὶ ἐξέτ[ρ]<ι>ψεν. τεκμαίρομαι
| δὲ τῷ ἐμῷ θανάτῳ. [ἐ]γὼ | γάρ σοι καταράσομαι μὲν οὐ- | δέν, ἐπεύξομαι δέ σοι τὴν |
δικαιο[υ]ν[α]ν εὐχῇν. εἰ μὲν σὺ ἐμέ [δ]ί[κ]α[ι]α ἐποίησας, πολ[ύ]

(POxy 2330; cf. Lenfant F 8b = FGrH 688 F 8b)¹⁶⁰

... that you were leaving a curse. And he said: 'First of all, I shall write a letter to Zareinaea.' And he writes: 'Stryangaeus to Zareinaea says thus: I saved you, and you were saved through me, but I have been ruined by you and I have killed myself; for you were unwilling to grant me your favours. I did not of myself choose these evils and this love, but love destroyed me. This god is common to you and all mankind. Whomever he approaches favourably, he gives the utmost pleasures and contrives for him very many other benefits, but whomever he comes to in anger, as with me now, having brought to him the utmost sufferings, he finally destroys him completely and wipes him out. I come to this conclusion from my own death. I will not curse you in any way, but will make this most righteous prayer of you: if you acted justly by me, ...'

Although a greeting with *χαίρειν* might have been very appropriate, in this letter Ctesias uses the old-fashioned Herodotean letter opening (Nicolaus has the variant *λέγει τάδε*, which is just as old-fashioned); the reason will have been that already at the end of the fifth century this opening was commonly felt to be oriental, and thus appropriate to the situation. As for the content of the letter, it is extraordinary: this is the first love-letter in Greek literature, doubling up as a suicide note; and for a long time it will remain unique. It is all the more regrettable that the other letters mentioned in Ctesias' work are lost; comparison of the prescripts would have been informative.

¹⁵⁸ = Lenfant F 8a = FGrH 688 F 8a. The story is also recounted in the anonymous treatise *De mulier.* 2 (Lenfant F 7 = FGrH 688 F 7); on its relationship to Ctesias' original account see Gera 1997. Diodorus 2. 34. 1–5 describes the reign of Zarinaea, but does not mention the love story.

¹⁵⁹ For a detailed comparison of the papyrus and Nicolaus see Biltcliffe 1968.

¹⁶⁰ Text based on the revised readings of Giannattasio Andria 2003; cf. Stronk 2007: 52–3. At l. 24, the papyrus has ἐξέτ[ρ]ψεν, corrected by Lenfant to ἐξέτ[ρ]ψεν. A form of ἐκτρίβω makes indeed more sense in the context; Lenfant is followed by Stronk 2007: 53–4.

4.4. FROM THE FOURTH TO THE SECOND CENTURY

Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon offered a continuous narrative, which made it possible to evaluate the place and role given to documents, and in particular letters, within that narrative. The next such extended narrative to have survived at least in part is the work of Polybius (c.200–118 BC). This is why, after providing a few indications of ‘trends’ in letter writing in the fragmentary historians of the fourth and third centuries, I shall focus on Polybius’ *Histories*, whose first five books offer a continuous account, and whose work offers us a sense of the role played by epistolary communication in the Hellenistic period (and Hellenistic historiography).

Of the numerous historical works that were written in the fourth and third century, not one survives. We have fragments, mostly of limited size; and because these fragments were chosen and preserved by authors with specific interests and agendas, they may not reflect the overall character of the work from which they come. In such a situation, it is impossible to speak of ‘epistolary strategies’, or to discuss the comparative frequency of various types of documents: absence of quoted letters or of references to letters in the fragments of course need not mean that letters or references to letters were absent from the original work. We can thus only note presences that may provide hints of the directions taken by, and that reflect on, letter writing in this period.

The first remarkable development is that historians now write letters which enter into public circulation. This is part of a larger trend, a new development specific to the fourth century, which will be discussed more fully later: the letters of some orators (Isocrates, Demosthenes) and some philosophers (Plato, Epicurus) are better known, simply because they have survived; but writing open letters is a phenomenon frequent also among those we classify as ‘historians’—a salutary reminder of the shared roots of rhetoric and historiography.¹⁶¹ Addressing one individual person had the advantage that the author ‘did not have to consider whether his subject and treatment were of sufficient public importance, or seriousness, or respectability, to interest an ideal fellow citizen. He built on the fact—or created the fiction—that there was *one* other person ready to be interested in his topic, and addressed that one person, writing, as personally as he liked, about as minute a subject as he chose.’¹⁶²

Among the historians we find two main types of letters, depending on the interests of the writer: erudite ones, engaging in intellectual disputes of one sort or another, and political ones, addressed to kings or personalities active in politics.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ The letters of Isocrates are discussed below, 286–92. Shared roots: Nicolai 1992; Nicolai 2004; also Porciani 1997 for a discussion of the epistolary proem of historical works. On literary letters, cf. Dalby 2000, who speaks of ‘a coterie of men who wrote letters to one another, letters which circulated among others and which continued to circulate long enough for Plutarch and Athenaeus to refer to them, five centuries later’. Dalby discusses specifically the epistolary exchange between Lynceus and Hippolochus, Poseidippus, Apollodorus, and Diagoras. Randall’s fascinating study (2008) of the continuities and changes in the use of letters from antiquity to the Renaissance helps put the change in fourth-century Greece in a wider perspective.

¹⁶² Dalby 2000: 375.

¹⁶³ A third type of letter, common among those Dalby (2000) calls the ‘anecdotalists’, seems to have mainly focused on describing royal dinners, wedding, processions, and similar exceptional events;

The Attidographer Philochorus (born c.340 BC) offers two good examples of the first type. To judge from the one fragment of each that has survived, his *Letter to Alypus* and *Letter to Asclepiades* must have been erudite letters, small scholarly *recherché* works on literary issues. Starting from a passage in Aristophanes, the first one probably discussed the use of garlic in ancient Athens during the festival of the *Skira*. The other concerned the genealogy of Hecuba.¹⁶⁴ Neither Alypus nor Asclepiades are known, but the erudite character of the letters is borne out by the fact that the only references to the two men come from a lexicon and an ancient commentary. Letters of this type are also used for (more or less polemical) discussions of specific aspects of an event. Thus, Polybius himself states in his *Histories* that he wrote a letter to the Rhodian historian Zeno, because of an important error that the latter had made in the topography of Laconia. Polybius continues by saying that on receipt of the letter Zeno had to admit his mistake, but because his work was already published he could not correct it; still, although very much grieved, he took the criticism in good part.¹⁶⁵ This may have been a private letter, or it may have circulated widely. But had Polybius not seen fit to mention the exchange (and underline in this way his superior knowledge of Laconian geography), we would not have known of it.¹⁶⁶

Besides this kind of erudite small treatise in the form of a letter, the epistolary medium is also used for pamphlets, to address political issues, to give advice, and to attack enemies. Several such letters are attributed to Theopompus (otherwise mostly known for his—lost—*Epitome of Herodotus*, *Hellenica*, and *Philippica*). An epigraphical booklist from Rhodes mentions a *Letter to Philip* and a *Letter to Evagoras* among his works;¹⁶⁷ a *Letter to Alexander*, *Counsels to Alexander*, and *Chian Letters* are mentioned in Athenaeus.¹⁶⁸ Jacoby's hypothesis that these letters, some of them longer, other less so, were put together in a volume with the overall title of *Letters from Chios* is very attractive: it would explain the very similar content of passages attributed to different letters.¹⁶⁹ Of the *Letter to Philip* one fragment remains, preserved in Didymus' commentary to Demosthenes: in it,

although such letters certainly offer material for social history, their writers are not known for also having written 'traditional' historical works, and for this reason I shall not take them into account here.

¹⁶⁴ See FGrH 328 F 89 (= Photius, s.v. τροπηλῖς), for the letter to Alypus, and FGrH 328 F 91 (= schol. Eur. *Hec.* 1) for that to Asclepiades.

¹⁶⁵ Plb. 16. 20: ὁ δὲ [Zenon] λαβὼν τὴν ἐπιστολὴν, καὶ γνοὺς ἀδύνατον οὖσαν τὴν μετὰθεσιν διὰ τὸ προεκδεδωκέναι τὰς συντάξεις, ἐλυπηθῆ μὲν ὡς ἐνι μάλιστα, ποιεῖν δ' οὐδὲν εἶχε, τὴν γε μὴν ἡμετέραν αἴρεσιν ἀπεδέξατο φιλοφρόνως. See McGing 2010: 79–80.

¹⁶⁶ Whether it circulated widely or not, the letter (or its mention) is unlikely to have made Polybius popular with contemporary historians: Walbank 1967: 525.

¹⁶⁷ FGrH 115 T 48 = Maiuri, *Nuova silloge epigrafica* (Florence 1925), no. 11, col. 1, ll. 22–3 (at 24, the Συμβουλευ[τικὸς πρὸς] | Ἀλέξαν[δρον] is also mentioned). Both titles are restored, but in the case of the *Letter to Philip* independent evidence (Didymus, see below) makes the restoration almost certain.

¹⁶⁸ FGrH 115 F 252, 253 and 254 = Athen. 6. 230 EF, 13. 595 AC, and 13. 586 C. Note also FGrH 115 T 20a = Dion. Hal. *ad Pomp.* 6. 1, for the title *Chian Letters*. In his *Ad Atticum* 12. 40. 2 (= FGrH 115 F 251), Cicero refers in the same sentence to the books *To Alexander* (πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον) of Aristotle and Theopompus, adding that 'they wrote what was both creditable to themselves and pleasing to Alexander'. Considering the character of the extracts from the letters of Theopompus that we have, this is slightly surprising, and makes caution in the use of the fragments even more necessary.

¹⁶⁹ Jacoby, FGrH 2B (Kommentar), 390.

Theopompus viciously attacked Hermias of Atarneus.¹⁷⁰ In the one certain fragment from the *Letter to Alexander* Theopompus reprimanded Harpalus for the grandiose burial he gave to the courtesan Pythionice, 'not only three times a slave, but also three times a whore' (μη̄ μόνον τρίδουλον ἀλλὰ καὶ τρίπορνον αὐτήν); attacks on Harpalus, again for his relationship with the courtesans Pythionice and Glycera, also figured in the so-called *Letters from Chios* (ἐπιστολάς τε τὰς Χιακὰς ἐπιγραφόμενας).¹⁷¹ Finally, the one fragment we have of the *Counsels to Alexander* (Πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον συμβουλαί) contains a harsh verbal assault on another citizen of Chios, Theocritus, who is accused of having become suddenly so rich that he now drinks only from gold or silver vessels.¹⁷² As Jacoby comments, the comparison (or rather the contrast) with Isocrates' letters is certainly instructive.¹⁷³ The same Theocritus who attracted the barbs of Theopompus is known, apart from his political activity, for having written *Anecdotes*, a *History of Libya*, and *Marvellous Letters* (Ἐπιστολαί θαυμασίαι). The *Suda*, the only ancient text to mention them, does not provide any information as to the possible content of the *Marvellous Letters*; we are thus reduced to guesswork.¹⁷⁴ These letters may have contained anecdotes, possibly on the contemporary events at the Macedonian court (the title might have been ironic): after all, Theocritus was famous for his anecdotes and his witty repartee (one example is mentioned below). Finally, the trend begun by Ctesias with his love-letter found followers, and not just in the novel: another instance of the genre is the moving story about Ariadne narrated by a certain Paeon, a local historian of Amathus in Cyprus (possibly active in the third century BC). According to Paeon, when Theseus abandoned Ariadne pregnant on Cyprus, the women of the island composed and gave her a forged letter which appeared to have been written by Theseus (γράμματα πλαστὰ προσφέρειν, ὡς τοῦ Θησέως γράφοντος αὐτῇ).¹⁷⁵

Letters along the lines established by Herodotus and Thucydides continue to feature within historical works. Stories of treason revolving around letters still appear, but now they concern not only the east, but also the west. East first: within the very little that we have of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (a continuation of Thucydides' work, composed in the first half of the fourth century), two extremely fragmentary passages tell of incidents in which communication through letters seems to play an important role, in the one case involving letters exchanged between Greeks, in the other between Persians. During the siege of an unknown city (possibly Byzantion in 409 BC), a guard lets down a rope from the wall, and

¹⁷⁰ FGrH 115 F 250 = Didym. in Demosth. V 21.

¹⁷¹ *Letter to Alexander*: FGrH 115 F 253 = Athen. 13. 595 AC; *Letters from Chios*: FGrH 115 F 254a and b = Athen. 13.586 c and 13. 595 DE. These various titles might refer to one work only; however, the title *Letters from Chios* is confirmed by Dion. Hal. *ad Pomp.* 6.1 = FGrH 115 T 20a. On the historical context of these letters, see Flower 1997: 258–62.

¹⁷² FGrH 115 F252 = Athen. 6. 230 EF. This work may have been the same as the *Letter to Alexander*. On Theocritus, see below.

¹⁷³ Jacoby, FGrH 2B (Kommentar), 390. This has of course nothing to do with the question of whether Theopompus (and Ephorus) were students of Isocrates or not; on this issue see Nicolai 1992: 159–63 and Flower 1997: 42–62, who both draw a negative conclusion.

¹⁷⁴ See the excellent discussion by Roller 2013, in BNJ 760 T 1 (= *Suda* s.v. Θεόκριτος Χίος), as well as his 'bibliographical essay' in the same entry.

¹⁷⁵ FGrH/BNJ 757 F 2 = Plut. *Thes.* 20.

exchanges by this means letters with someone (a Myndian?) waiting in the woods outside; we do not know how the affair ended.¹⁷⁶ The other passage of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* in which letters figure (ἐπιστολάς, three times repeated) concerns the story of how the newly nominated satrap Tithraustes eliminated Tissaphernes with the help of Ariaeus. What role exactly the letters played in the affair is, again, difficult to tell; but since a similar story is also told in Polyaeus' *Stratagems*, we may deduce that a trick was involved.¹⁷⁷ As for the west, treacherous letters are now also one of the main features in the stories concerning the Sicilian tyrants. A good instance is offered by the tussle between Dionysius II and Dion over Syracuse, as narrated by the historians Timonides (a supporter of Dion and contemporary with the events) and Timaeus of Tauromenium (c.356–260 BC), whose narratives of this affair have been preserved by Plutarch. The first moment in the drama is an intercepted letter. When Dionysius was already getting suspicious in c.366 BC,

a certain letter was secretly carried to him (ἐκομίσθη τις ἐπιστολή κρύφα) which Dion had written to the Carthaginian authorities, urging them, whenever they should treat with Dionysius for peace, not to open discussions without including him, since he would help them to arrange everything securely. [5] This letter Dionysius read to Philistus, and after consulting with him, as Timaeus records, fooled Dion by a feigned reconciliation. [6] That is, after modest protests and a declaration that their quarrel was over, he led him off alone beneath the acropolis down to the sea, showed him the letter (ἐδείξε τὴν ἐπιστολήν), and accused him of conspiring with the Carthaginians against him. [7] When Dion tried to defend himself, he would not allow it, but at once put him just as he was on a small boat, commanding the sailors to deposit him in Italy. (Plutarch, *Dion* 14. 4–7 = *BNJ* 566 F 113)

In this instance, Dionysius' behaviour is extremely moderate. As a result, Dion makes a comeback, and in 357 BC he is in Syracuse, occupying all of the city excepted Ortygia, where the garrison of Dionysius resists. At this point, the friends of the tyrant send him letters to inform him of the arrival of Dion (ἐκπέμπει κατὰ τάχος ἄγγελον τῷ Διονυσίῳ γράμματα κομίζοντα: Dionysius is at the moment in southern Italy)—in vain, because the courier has a bizarre mishap:

But a strange misfortune befell the man who had been sent with the letters (γραμματοφόρῳ). After he had crossed to Italy and passed through the territory of Rhegium, and as he was hastening on to Dionysius at Caulonia, he met one of his acquaintances who was carrying an animal that had been recently sacrificed, and after accepting from him a portion of the flesh, went on his way with all speed. 8 But after

¹⁷⁶ *Hell. Oxy.*, Florence fragment, fr. C, V 2: δ | δὲ Μύνδ<ι>ος ἐξελ[θὼν ἐ]κ τῆς | ὅλης πρώτον μὲν εἴ τι | γραμματεῖον εἶη παρ' ἐκείνου καθευμένον [[τε]] ἐλάμβα- | [νε]ν καὶ διεφύλαττ[ε]ν, [ἔπειτα] δὲ προ[σ]ήψεν αὐτὸς ἂν | ἕτερον [τῷ σπάρτω γ]ραμμ[α]|| [...] with Bruce 1967: 47–8 (who mentions the possibility that μύνδος 'dumb' or 'silent' may be meant here, only to reject it); McKechnie and Kern 1988: 129–31; Russell 1999: 156. What follows is lost.

¹⁷⁷ *Hell. Oxy.*, London fragment, fr. B, XIII, cols. 7–8. In D. S. 14. 80. 7, King Artaxerxes appoints Tithraustes as commander with orders to arrest Tissaphernes and sends letters to the cities and the satraps requesting that all perform whatever Tithraustes may command. Polyaeus 7. 16 has a detailed account, very close to that of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, in which Artaxerxes sends Tithraustes to arrest Tissaphernes, having given him two letters: one gives him command, the other is for Ariaeus, ordering the latter to help Tithraustes in the arrest. Ariaeus reads the letter, and immediately proceeds. Cf. Bruce 1967: 80–92; McKechnie and Kern 1988: 148.

travelling part of the night, he was compelled by weariness to take a little sleep, and lay down, just as he was, in a wood by the side of the road. [9] Then a wolf came to the spot, attracted by the scent, and seizing the flesh which had been fastened to the wallet in which the man had his letters, went off with it and the wallet too. [10] When the man awoke and perceived what had happened, he wandered about a long time in search of what he had lost, but could not find it, and therefore determined not to go to the tyrant without the letters, but to run away and disappear.

(Plutarch, *Dion* 26. 7–10, trans. Perrin)

Plutarch does not say who is his source for this specific incident, but this story fits very well with the role played by letters in the overall narrative—besides giving a close insight into the difficulties of the life of a messenger. Eventually, Dionysius hears of Dion's return, comes back to Syracuse, and tries to get in touch with Dion by sending envoys; he also mounts a surprise attack against Syracuse, which fails. At this point, the tyrant moves to letters: he decides to forward to Dion letters ostensibly written by members of Dion's family who are in his power, but inserts among them one of his own, written as if by Dion's son (here, Plutarch relies on both Timaeus and Timonides):

Heralds came down from Dionysius bringing letters to Dion from the women of his family. There was also one addressed outside, 'To his father, from Hipparinus' (μία δ' ἦν ἔξωθεν ἐπιγεγραμμένη τῷ πατρὶ παρ' Ἰππαρίνου); for this was the name of Dion's son. [2] Timaeus, it is true, says he was called Aretaeus, from his mother Arete; but on this point at least, in my opinion, Timonides, who was a friend and fellow-soldier of Dion's, is rather to be trusted. Well, then, the rest of the letters were read aloud to the Syracusans (αἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλαι τοῖς Συρακοσίοις ἀνεγνώσθησαν ἐπιστολαί), and contained many supplications and entreaties from the women; but that which purported to be from Dion's son the people would not allow to be opened in public. Dion, however, insisted upon it, and opened the letter. The letter was from Dionysius, ostensibly to Dion, but in fact to the Syracusans (ἣν δὲ παρὰ τοῦ Διονυσίου, τοῖς μὲν γράμμασι πρὸς τὸν Δίωνα, τοῖς δὲ πράγμασι πρὸς τοὺς Συρακοσίους διαλεγόμενον). Cast in a tone of entreaty and self-justification, it was intended to foment ill-will against Dion. [3] There were reminders of his eager services in the interests of the tyranny, and threats against those closest to him—his sister, his child, and his wife; there were also serious urgings [...] that he should seize power himself, protecting the safety of his friends and family. (32) When these things had been read aloud, the Syracusans were not astonished (though they should have been) at the steadfastness and great-heartedness of Dion, who was resisting because of honour and justice such strong family obligations, but they instead began to regard Dion with suspicion and fear, thinking he was under great compulsion to spare the tyrant, and they were already looking to other leaders.

(Plutarch, *Dion* 31. 2–32. 1 = Timonides *BNJ* 561 F 1 = Timaeus *BNJ* 556 F 114; trans. Perrin, modified).

The letter achieves its purpose of casting doubt on Dion: the Syracusans look to another leader, Heracleides; Dion would die three years later, in 354 BC.¹⁷⁸

Of course, stories of this kind were too good to pass over unmentioned. What is more striking is the large amount of routine letters that are mentioned, more or less casually. For instance, we owe to Athenaeus' book on parasites two identical

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion of the sources concerning the activity and the end of Dion (which include Plato's seventh and eighth letter) see Westlake 1983; Champion 2013a and b.

stories, attributed to two different authorities, located in two different courts (east and west, again) but occurring at approximately the same time. Both play on the arrival of letters. In one version, attributed by Athenaeus to Hegesander of Delphi (a writer of anecdotal *Commentaries*, active in the mid-second century BC), Philip II announces that a letter has been brought to him from Cotys, king of Thrace, whereupon Cleisophus the parasite exclaims 'By the gods, excellent!'; when the king asks back, 'How do you know?', the parasite praises him for the well-founded rebuke. The other version is attributed to Timaeus: here it is the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius who enters the room announcing that he has received letters from his officers in Neapolis; the reactions of the parasite (Democles) and of the king are the same: the parasite simply continues where he had left, 'Excellent . . . criticism!'¹⁷⁹

Letters to or from Alexander are also often mentioned. For instance, we owe to Plutarch's *Life of Phocion* an important piece of information on Alexander's practice in addressing his letters:

Ὁ γοῦν Δούρις εἶρηκεν, ὡς μέγας γενόμενος (Ἀλέξανδρος) καὶ Δαρείου κρατήσας ἀφείλε τῶν ἐπιστολῶν τὸ Χαίρειν, πλὴν ἐν ὅσαις ἔγραφε Φωκίωνι, τοῦτον δὲ μόνον, ὥσπερ Ἀντίπατρον, μετὰ τοῦ Χαίρειν προσηγόρευε. Τοῦτο δὲ καὶ Χάρης ἰστόρηκε.
(Plut. *Phoc.* 17 = FGrH/BNJ Duris 76 F 51 = FGrH Chares 125 F 10)

For Duris has said that after he had become great and had conquered Darius, he left out the word 'greetings' from his letters, except for those he wrote to Phocion. Him alone, and Antipater as well, he addressed with the word 'greetings'. Chares has related this as well. (Trans. Pownall)¹⁸⁰

Another historian, Phylarchus, criticizing the extraordinary luxury in which Alexander and his friends lived, recounts that the king at some point even wrote to the Ionian cities, and in particular to Chios, asking for purple, because he wanted to dress all of his *hetairoi* in sea-purple clothing. The letter was read out publicly to the population of Chios (*ἀναγνωσθείσης δὲ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς Χίοις*). We have the story because on this occasion Theocritus (the contemporary of Theopompus mentioned above, and a violent opponent of Alexander) aptly quoted the Homeric verse *ἔλλαβε πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή*, 'and him took purple death and a harsh fate'.¹⁸¹

The passages stressing the importance of letter writing at the courts of the Hellenistic kings are legion: accessibility and punctilious attention to correspondence are part of the image of the ideal king presented by the Hellenistic literature

¹⁷⁹ First story: Athen. 6.248 E; second story: Athen. 6.250 AD = FGrH/BNJ 566 F 32. See on both stories Dalby 2000: 377 n. 24, and 381 for important remarks on the (sometimes very uncomfortable) closeness between historians and anecdotists.

¹⁸⁰ Plutarch gets his information from Duris of Samos (active at the turn of the fourth century, and an author of numerous now-lost works, among which was a historical work in at least twenty-three books, variously called *Macedonica*, *Histories*, or *Hellenica*: see Pownall 2013, BNJ 76, 'Biographical essay') and Chares of Mytilene (who acted as the court marshal, *εἰσαγγελεύς*, of Alexander, and wrote a *History of Alexander* in ten books). The same information is also conveyed, without source references, in Aelian. VH 1. 25. On the story, besides Jacoby and Pownall 2013 *ad loc.*, see Gerhard 1904.

¹⁸¹ FGrH 81 F 41 = Athen. 12. 539 B–540 A. Phylarchus mentioned letters in other parts of his work, e.g. twice in connection with Cleomenes (FGrH 81 F 55 and F 59); but as both fragments are preserved in Polybius and as anyway these are not *verbatim* quotes, it seems reasonable to discuss them in the context of Polybius' own work.

on kingship. Hecataeus of Abdera, for instance, in his idealized image of Ptolemy, emphasizes the importance of dealing promptly with correspondence.¹⁸²

Finally, long letters are inserted within historical works. Here, the fragmentary state of the works of the fourth- and third-century historians is particularly problematic, as often we have to rely on a paraphrase and cannot know whether a text might have been quoted. But one case stands out, that of Anaximenes. According to the notice in the *Suda* (a 1989), Anaximenes of Lampsacus was a *didaskalos*, a teacher of Alexander, whom he followed in war. The sources say that he wrote about (*συνέγραψατο*) 'the ancient events of Greece and what Philip son of Amyntas and later Alexander did' (Paus. 6. 18. 2), that is *Hellenica* (from the birth of the gods to the battle of Mantinea) followed by *Philippica*, and another work, *On Alexander*; other kinds of writings were also attributed to him. Of all these, apart from the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* ascribed to him, only scanty fragments remain. He is nonetheless worth discussing here for two reasons. First, just like Ctesias, he seems to have made a rather free use of the written word. According to Pausanias, Anaximenes retaliated against Theopompus, with whom he had quarrelled, by writing 'a treatise abusing Athenians, Lacedaemonians, and Thebans alike. Having imitated the style of Theopompus with perfect accuracy, he inscribed the latter's name upon the book and sent it round to the cities. Though Anaximenes was the author of the treatise, hatred of Theopompus grew throughout all of Greece.'¹⁸³ The treatise became known as the *Tricaranus* (one wonders whether the title *τρικάρανος* may not have been meant as an allusion to Theopompus' own description in one of his *Chian Letters* of the courtesan Pythionice as *τρίδουλον καὶ τρίπορνον*), and the story finds a plausible context in the polemical style that characterizes fourth-century historiography;¹⁸⁴ yet no one had hitherto gone so far as to write an invective against the three most powerful cities of Greece and then attribute it to a rival.

The second reason why Anaximenes is worth mentioning here has to do specifically with letters: according to the testimony of Didymus, Anaximenes inserted a speech of Demosthenes into his historical work, which was put together from bits and pieces of various real Demosthenic speeches.¹⁸⁵ In Anaximenes' historical work this speech constituted the reaction to a letter of Philip, which Anaximenes also inserted into his work. This may be the letter preserved in the *Corpus Demosthenicum* as [Demosth.] or. 12 (cf. *FGrH* 72 F 41), which, although

¹⁸² *FGrH* 264 F 25 = D. S. 1. 70. 4 (but the entire passage, D.S. 1. 70. 1–10, is fascinating). On the ideal monarch see Walbank 1984: 77–8; for the importance of audiences, Savalli 2007; specifically on the correspondence, Virgilio 2011: 24–30.

¹⁸³ Paus. 6. 18. 5 = *FGrH* 72 T 6. The authorship of the *Tricaranus* remains uncertain; detailed discussion in Parmeggiani 2012.

¹⁸⁴ Pythionice: above, 162. For the new 'polemical approach', see Marincola 1997: 228–31.

¹⁸⁵ This is the speech transmitted in the *Corpus Demosthenicum* as [Demosth.] or. 11, cf. *FGrH* 72 F 11a and b. Our source for this is Didymus *On Demosthenes* 11.7 = *FGrH* 72 F 11a: *ὑποσημειώσας δ' ἂν τις οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ συμπεφορήσθαι τὸ λογίδιον* (or. XI) *ἔκ τινων Δημοσθένους πραγματεῶν ἐπισυντεθέν. καὶ εἰσὶν οἱ φασιν Ἀναξίμενους εἶναι τοῦ Λαμψακηνοῦ τὴν συμβουλὴν, καὶ γὰρ δὴ ἐν τῇ ἑβδόμῃ τῶ[ν Φιλιππικῶν <δλ>ον ὀλίγου δεῖν γράμμασαν ἀ[ὐτοῖς ἐ]ντετ[ά]χθ[α]ι*. See on this Canfora 1991: 70–1; Squillace 2004: 37–8 and 101–7, who suggests that also a letter of Darius (Arr. *Anab.* 2. 14. 1–3, Curt. 4. 1. 7–14; see also D. S. 17. 39. 1–2 for Alexander's manipulations) and the answering letter of Alexander (Arr. *Anab.* 2. 14. 5–9) may have been the work of Anaximenes; Harding 2006: 216–23; and below, 276 and n. 40.

probably not an original letter of Philip, is certainly closely modelled on one; in this case, both Philip's letter and Demosthenes' response in the *Corpus Demosthenicum* would have come originally from Anaximenes' work.¹⁸⁶ As the story of his revenge on Theopompus shows, Anaximenes prided himself on having 'a natural aptitude for rhetoric and for imitating the style of rhetoricians', as Pausanias puts it (6. 18. 5). To find him writing letters or speeches in the style of the Macedonian king and Demosthenes respectively is thus no surprise. But in his work we have the earliest attestation of the insertion in a historical narrative of a long Greek royal letter, supposedly written c.340 BC (Eumenes may already have been active in Philip's chancery), and presenting the standard epistolary greeting *Φίλιππος Ἀθηναίων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν*, 'Philip to the council and the people of Athens, greetings'. (Given Anaximenes' record of precision in staying close to the language of the originals, we may well believe that this formulation reflects the authentic prescript.) The two sentences that follow the prescript also present interesting elements. Right after the prescript, the body of the letter opens with a causal clause introduced by *ἐπειδὴ*, as is usually also the case for city decrees: Philip justifies his sending a letter, and somehow implies that he resorts to a written document because of the failure of previous oral embassies (*Ἐπειδὴ πολλάκις μου πρέσβεις ἀποστείλαντος, ἔν' ἐμμένωμεν τοῖς ὅρκοις καὶ ταῖς ὁμολογίαις, οὐδεμίαν ἐποιεῖσθ' ἐπιστροφὴν, ὥμην δεῖν πέμψαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὑπὲρ ὧν ἀδικεῖσθαι νομίζω*). This positive appreciation of writing is to be expected by a *syngrapheus*; whether it was shared by Philip is uncertain. In the following sentence (the third one of the letter, including the prescript in the count), one of the elements highlighted as crucial in discussion of epistolary writing is mentioned: length. Philip (Anaximenes?) excuses himself for the length of his letter, explaining that it is due to the number of accusations he has to deal with (*μὴ θαυμάσητε δὲ τὸ μῆκος τῆς ἐπιστολῆς· πολλῶν γὰρ ὑπαρχόντων ἐγκλημάτων ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν ὑπὲρ ἀπάντων δηλώσαι καθαρῶς*). It is difficult not to hear behind this remark an echo of the principle expressed by the later rhetoricians on brevity as an important characteristic of the letter. As we shall see, from Isocrates onwards this notion—still absent in Thucydides' work—had established itself; by now, epistolary rules exist.

4.4.1. Mediated Long-distance Communication in Polybius

Polybius' *Histories* offer in the first five books a continuous narrative of events in the Mediterranean, with a summary coverage of the years 264 to 220 in the first two, followed by a detailed narrative of the beginning of the second Punic war (220–217 BC) in book 3, and a similarly detailed narrative of events in Greece and the East for the period of the 140th Olympiad (220–217 BC) in books 4 and 5; of the rest of his work in forty volumes only excerpts survive, some fairly extensive,

¹⁸⁶ Non-authentic: Jacoby *ad loc.*; authentic: Gauger 2000: 73 and 306 n. 20. Two fragments (*FGrH* 328 F 55a = Dionys. Hal. *Ad Amm.* 11, and F 55b = Didym. in *Demosth.* col. 1, 67), show that Philochorus, whom we have seen as a writer of erudite letters, summarized within his *Atthis* a letter of Philip to the Athenians, as well as the speech of Demosthenes in reply, which led to the war: see Jacoby commentary *ad loc.*; Harding 2006: 114–15; Canfora 1991: 70–1 assumes the existence of various versions.

so that on the whole the *Histories* offer a reasonably reliable body of evidence for observing both epistolary practices during the time period covered and their historiographical representation. Two things leap to one's attention: first, the sheer number of references to epistolary communication, which highlights the existence of a network covering the entire Mediterranean, east to west—even though very few letters are actually quoted *in extenso* or even summarized; and second, the relatively large number of references to forged letters as a strategy designed to further treasonous plots.¹⁸⁷

Let us start with Polybius' references to epistolary communication. Letters, messengers (*γραμματοφόροι*), and written exchanges between parties in general are ubiquitous, and occur across all of the ancient Mediterranean.¹⁸⁸ This is in keeping with Polybius' explicit assessment of what makes the period of time he has chosen to investigate extraordinary. Before the 140th Olympiad, he says, events took place in a sporadic way, being specific only to that part of the world where they were happening; but 'ever since this date history has been an organic whole, and the affairs of Italy and Libya have been interlinked with those of Greece and Asia, all leading up to one end' (1. 3. 3–4). This notion of a historical interweaving of events or *συμπλοκή* is mirrored in the swift movements (at times over remarkable distances) of generals and troops, of embassies, and of letters sent and received by the very protagonists of that new interconnectedness. In most instances, these letters are simple routine exchanges. This fact is in itself significant since it shows that written communication is by now one of the staples of diplomacy.¹⁸⁹ Significantly, too, the *Histories* display a new vocabulary of epistolary communication: *γραμματοφόρος*, 'letter carrier', is first found in Polybius; a letter (or, less frequently, its letter carrier) 'makes [something] quite clear' (*διασαφένω*).¹⁹⁰ It is of course impossible to exclude the possibility that

¹⁸⁷ For both text and translation of Polybius I have used Paton's edition, revised by Walbank and Habicht (and Olson for the unattributed fragments), 2010–12. I here build on, and develop, observations made in Pédech 1964: 377–89; Troiani 1979; Zecchini 2003; Prandi 2003; McGing 2010; Virgilio 2011: 30–1. I do not discuss here the issue of the all too real differences between Greek perception and Roman practice; but see Ando 1999.

¹⁸⁸ Numbers in Zecchini 2003 (based on Mauersberger's *Polybios-Lexicon*): *ἐπιστολή* appears fifty-eight times, *γράμμα* or *γράμματα* twenty-three times, *γραμματοφόρος* eleven times. Some of these references refer to the same exchange; on the other hand, these data do not take into account the numerous instances in which someone 'writes to tell' or 'writes and sends' (e.g. 5. 28. 4; 13. 4. 7), which clearly imply letters.

¹⁸⁹ See Walbank 1972: 68–71, and on the transformations in terms of translation, migration, and communication, which all set in at this moment, Moatti 2006 (although for what concerns communication, she focuses only on the imperial period). Diplomatic exchanges take place also of course through the sending of envoys, mainly defined *πρέσβεις*; the more or less spontaneous *ἄγγελοι* have however now disappeared (for the very few instances see Mauersberger, *Polybios-Lexicon*, s.v., and compare with the very numerous instances of *πρέσβεις*, *πρεσβεία*). But contacts can be initiated through letters: see below, 294–5 and n. 98.

¹⁹⁰ On *διασαφένω* with the meaning of 'give instructions per letter' in Polybius see Walbank 1957: 144. A passage from book 15 presents Agathocles, who thanks to a forged (so Polybius) testament has become tutor of the young king Ptolemy V, as being kept informed by letters and spies, in a parallelism expressed by both the choice of the vocabulary and the sentence structure (Plb. 15. 29. 6: *ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ἀγαθοκλῆς, ἀνερχθείσης πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπιστολῆς καὶ κατασκόπων ἐπαναχθέντων, καὶ τῆς μὲν ἐπιστολῆς γεγραμμένης πρὸς τὰς δυνάμεις παρὰ τοῦ Τληπολέμου καὶ δηλοῦσης ὅτι παρέσται ταχέως, τῶν δὲ κατασκόπων διασαφούντων ὅτι πάρεσται, οὕτως...*). Another such terminological change, which

such terminology might have been used already in some of the earlier—lost—historians; nonetheless, its massive presence in Polybius at this juncture in history is significant, as it reflects not only a specific understanding by Polybius of the important role played by written communication, but also a change in these very structures of communication that must have taken place in the wake of the expansion of the Greek world following Alexander's conquests. This change finds a reflection in contemporary official documents: one example will suffice here, the decree with which Lampsakos in c.195 BC honoured its citizen Hegesias for having accepted, in a situation of crisis, to lead an embassy to Rome. Hegesias first travelled to Greece, where he met with the Roman naval praetor (probably Lucius Quinctius Flamininus) and with the quaestor, and obtained from them a letter addressed to Lampsakos containing positive reassurances as to the independence of the city; the letter was deposited in the city archive. Hegesias then went on to Massalia, where he persuaded the council of the Six Hundred to give him delegates that would accompany him to Rome and also a letter for the Tolostogian Gauls, beneficial to the city of Lampsakos. He then travelled to Rome, where he and his fellow ambassadors presented their case to the Senate; the Senate agreed (in writing) to the main request, and referred him for the rest to the consul (Titus Quinctius Flamininus) and the commissioners appointed to the deal with the affairs of Greece. Hegesias thus went to Corinth, and there received from Titus a decree, and letters addressed to the kings.¹⁹¹ Clearly Hegesias' mission included soliciting letters and other documents which could be brought back to the city; equally clearly, these letters were considered 'useful' (*συμφέρουσα/αι* referring to *ἐπιστολή* appears four times)—but the very presence and repetition of such a statement of usefulness is intriguing: How far? In what ways?

At any rate, the decree for Hegesias shows that an envoy might, in the course of his travels, collect numerous 'useful' letters. A survey of Polybius' work that catalogues references to epistolary communication further supports the impression that letters are ubiquitous in Polybius' world.¹⁹² In 240 BC, the Carthaginian mercenaries in Sardinia can plausibly be thought to have sent letters to the rebels in Africa (1. 79. 9–10). In 230 BC, the arrival of letters from the Illyrian queen Teuta forces her troops to return (*προσπεσόντων παρὰ τῆς Τεύτας γραμμάτων*, 2. 6. 4). The Hellenistic kings write letters to promise assistance: an example is the missive Antigonos sent to the Megalopolitans in 226 BC (2. 50. 3).¹⁹³ Likewise,

implies a change in practice as well (or at any rate in how Polybius views exchanges) is the disappearance of figures such as the—too imprecise?—*ἄγγελοι*, for which see nn. 9 and 189 above. On Polybius' (non-)use of 'technical language' see Bertrand and Gruenais 1981; Mari forthcoming.

¹⁹¹ *L. Lampsakos* 4 (= *Syll.*³ 591); translation of the document in Bagnall and Derow 2004, no. 35. Letters are mentioned at ll. 39–41: [ἐλαβεν καὶ π]αρ' αὐτοῦ ἐπιστολὴν πρὸς τὸν δῆμον [ἡμῶν], [| ἦν γνοῦς] *συμφέρουσαν εἶναι κατεχώρισεν εἰς [τὰ δημό]-* | *[σια ἡμῶν ὁ δῆμος]*; 47–9: *κρίναντες δὲ χρήσιμον εἶναι ἀξιώσαντες ἔλα]-* | *[βον παρὰ τῶν] ἐξακοσίων συμφέρουσαν ἐπιστολὴν ὑ[πὲρ τοῦ δή]-* | *[μου πρὸς τὸν δῆμον] τῶν Τολοστοαγίων Γαλατῶν*; 63–4: [ἀξι]- | *[ὦν καὶ ἐπιστολὴν λαβεῖν συμφέρουσαν τῷ δήμῳ]*; 75–7: *περὶ ὧν καὶ ἔ[λαβε δόγ]-* | *[μα φιλάνθρωπον] καὶ ἐπιστολὰς πρὸς τοὺς βασιλεῖς - -]* | *[γνοὺς συμφερο]ύσας αὐτῷ εἶναι διαπέστευεν[- -]*.

¹⁹² Zecchini 2003: 415 singles out as exceptions the Iberian tribes—but that is all.

¹⁹³ His letter is first discussed in the assembly at Megalopolis, and then the Megalopolitans present it at the federal assembly of the Achaeans (the wording is interesting: *παρελθόντας τοὺς Μεγαλοπολίτας εἰς τὸ κοινὸν βουλευτήριον τὰ τε γράμματα τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς ἐπιδεικνύσαι καὶ διασαφεῖν τὴν ὅλην εὐνοίαν τοῦ*

after having taken Megalopolis in 223 BC, the Spartan king Cleomenes hastily dispatches messengers to those Megalopolitans currently in Messene; they carry a letter, in which he offers to give back the city if they will go over to his side; the Megalopolitans, however, do not allow the couriers to finish reading the letter (*τῆς ἐπιστολῆς ἀναγινωσκομένης*) and come close to stoning them (2. 61. 4–5).¹⁹⁴ In 220 BC the Aetolians Scopas and Dorimachus send *γραμματοφόροι* to their general Ariston at Cyllene (4. 9. 9). Later in that same year, Philip sends a letter to the Aetolians (4. 26. 3), and the Aetolians write back (4. 26. 5–6). Once he has decided to intervene in the Peloponnese, Philip sends messages (*γράμματα . . . ἐξαπέστειλεν*) to the general of the Achaeans and to the cities to inform them of when and where to meet him (4. 67. 8): the year is 219 BC. Back in Corinth, Philip again sends his letter carriers to the allied cities (*τοὺς γραμματοφόρους διαπέστειλε*, 5. 17. 9); because of the letter they have received from Philip (*κομισάμενοι τὰ γράμματα τὰ παρὰ τοῦ Φιλίππου*), the Messenians act rashly in support and suffer defeat at the hands of the Spartans (5. 20).

Courtiers too write letters. When Leontius, the commander of Philip's peltasts, finds himself in difficulty, he repeatedly writes to Apelles, another member of the Macedonian court, asking him to come over from Chalcis (5. 26. 2). Meanwhile, when ambassadors from Rhodes and Chios agree to a truce with the Aetolians, Philip writes to the allies (*ὁ δὲ Φίλιππος, δεξάμενος τὰς ἀνοχάς, τοῖς μὲν συμμάχοις ἔγραψε, διασαφὼν . . .*, 5. 28. 3); more or less at this same moment, other letters sent secretly to the Aetolians by Philip's head secretary Megaleas (*ἐπὶ τοῦ γραμματείου*, 4. 87. 8), who is actually an accomplice in Apelles' plot, are intercepted and found to contain treasonous advice as well as abuse of the king—this marks the swift end of Megaleas, and of Apelles as well (5. 28. 4).

Ptolemaic Egypt and the Seleucid kings now also enter the epistolary mode, with the false letter of Nicagoras, used by the Ptolemaic minister Sosibius against Cleomenes (5. 38), and with the forged letters of the Seleucid minister Hermias and of the rebel Molon (5. 50. 11–13). Antiochus himself writes official letters to Achaeus, threatening him (5. 57–8), while Achaeus marks his assumption of the diadem and of the royal title by writing to the cities in that capacity (*διάδημά τε περιέθετο καὶ βασιλεὺς τότε πρῶτον ἐτόλμησε χρηματίζειν καὶ γράφειν πρὸς τὰς πόλεις*).¹⁹⁵ Antiochus first decides to invade Coele-Syria because of the arrival of letters from Theodotus, 'an Aetolian by birth' and a former general of Ptolemy, who now wants to change sides and invites him (5. 61. 3: *προσπεσόντων παρὰ Θεοδότου γραμμάτων*). Back in Greece, while Philip is at the Nemean games of 217 BC, 'a letter carrier arrived from Macedon with the news (*παρὴν ἐκ Μακεδονίας γραμματοφόρος διασαφὼν*) that the Romans had lost a major battle

βασιλέως, 2. 50. 10; the Megalopolitans have, as it were, imbibed the letter, exactly as when it is the *grammatophoros* who 'makes clear').

¹⁹⁴ A nice instance of how much royal letters and their carriers could be disliked. In this passage, Polybius is explicitly polemicizing against Phylarchus' version of the events, so the sending of messengers and the attempt at stoning whoever was reading that letter must have been already in Phylarchus; but the terminology (in particular, the use of *γραμματοφόρους* for the messengers) is most likely Polybius' rather than Phylarchus'.

¹⁹⁵ There is a significant connection between the diadem, the royal title, and writing to the cities: see Virgilio 2011: 25.

and that Hannibal was in control of the Italian countryside'. Philip initially shares the letter only with Demetrius of Pharos (τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐπέδειξε, 5. 101. 6–7, repeated also at 5. 102. 2). This is a momentous letter: it induces Demetrius to counsel Philip to subdue Illyria and then attack Italy. As part of this strategic reorientation, Philip looks into arranging a peace with the Aetolians and sends letter carriers to the allied cities (πρὸς μὲν τὰς συμμαχίδας πόλεις γραμματοφόρους ἐξαπέστειλε) to invite representatives to participate in the discussion of the terms (5. 102. 8).

The sixth book contains Polybius' account of the Roman constitution. All the remaining books have only survived in fragments. Still, these fragments contain enough reports of letters and letter carriers to make it clear that the density of written exchanges did not diminish, and that everyone is involved in such exchanges. A fragment of book 7 (14b) shows that forged letters (ἐπιστολὴν διεσκευασμένην) can be used for dirty work in Syracuse.¹⁹⁶ In book 8, epistolary intrigue on the part of the Cretans Bolis and Cambylus links the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid courts. At the instigation of the Ptolemaic minister Sosibius, they get in touch with friends of Achaeus, from whom they receive a letter. But they then decide to betray Achaeus to Antiochus, and, with the approval of Antiochus, receive letters in cipher (συνθηματικὰ γράμματα, 8. 15. 9, 16. 9) from Achaeus' friends; Achaeus' trust in the letters of his friends Nicomachus and Melancomas, written in the cipher they used to employ, will be his undoing (8. 17).¹⁹⁷

Instances of normal, straightforward letters continue to appear in the fragmentary books as well. Back in the West, Hannibal uses a letter to inform the Capuans of his sudden decision to appear in front of Rome and thus force the Romans to abandon the siege of their city; Polybius adds that because of the importance of this message, great care was taken to ensure its safe delivery, τῆς τῶν γραμμάτων ἀσφαλείας (9. 5. 1). The letter succeeds in its purpose, since on receiving it the Capuans are reassured (9. 5. 6). The Roman senate keeps in touch with generals through letters, as is shown by numerous examples, such as the letter received by Scipio in 203/202 while he is outside Carthage in which he is informed that the Senate has ratified the treaty (15. 1. 4: ἄρτι γὰρ ἦκε τῷ Ποπλίῳ γράμματα διασαφούντα περὶ τῶν προειρημένων).¹⁹⁸

Similarly, Hellenistic kings send letters to the Greek cities: after meeting with the Romans in 172 BC, Perseus will send identical letters to various Greek states, detailing the arguments on both sides, trying in this way both to assert his superior position and to sound out the others' intentions (27. 4. 1).¹⁹⁹ When the ambassadors sent by the Ptolemies in 169/168 to ask for military help from the Achaeans realize that their request will fail, they give to the magistrates a letter from the

¹⁹⁶ In 213 BC, after Hieronymus' death, Syracuse is divided between a pro-Roman and an anti-Roman party; Hippocrates' forged letter, handed over to some Cretans, but meant to be found, represented an attempt to discredit the Syracusan authorities by presenting them as pro-Roman. Livy 24. 31. 6 supplements the Polybian fragments: Hippocrates is presented as giving a public reading of the forged letter, of which Livy quotes the address: 'The praetors of Syracuse to the consul Marcellus' (*praetores Syracusani consuli Marcello*); the rest is summarized in indirect speech. The letter achieves the desired effect: the men rush to the arms.

¹⁹⁷ On the letters in cipher (also ἐπιστολὰς γεγραμμένας συνθηματικῶς) see Walbank 1967: 94.

¹⁹⁸ Other examples in Livy, e.g. 23. 27. 10 for the letter of the Scipiones to Rome.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Livy 42. 46, listing the cities.

kings 'which they had ready (ἐτοίμας ἔχοντες)', asking the Achaeans to send at least Lycortas and Polybius (29. 25. 7). And even the Gerrhaei on the Persic gulf send a letter to Antiochus during his expedition in the Upper Satrapies in 205 BC, asking the king 'not to abolish the gifts the gods had bestowed on them, perpetual peace and freedom'; the letter is translated for the king (ἐρμηνευθείσης οἱ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς), who grants the request (13. 9. 4).

As Zecchini points out, 'this meticulous and almost maniacal attention to the instrument of communication, when the use of the epistolary form must have seemed already obvious to readers of Polybius, has a significance: it reflects a world that fully adhered to the culture of writing'.²⁰⁰ Polybius actually appears as a direct participant in the epistolary communication displayed in the *Histories*: he writes, as we saw, to the Rhodian historian Zeno, to inform him of his topographical mistakes; and he pens a note (whose text he quotes) to remind Demetrius of Syria of the plan for his escape.²⁰¹

Even though everyone uses letters in Polybius' world, not everyone uses them in the same way. This brings me to my second point, the frequent use of letters in political intrigue. The reports of generals to their cities, such as the Rhodian one discussed below (176), are straightforward documents; so too are most of the letters from kings (although Philip V is not above making use of epistolary stratagems; and Polybius sternly comments, 'Philip became addicted to that kind of treacherous dealing which no one indeed would say in any way became a king, but which some maintain to be necessary in practical politics, owing to the present prevalence of treachery', 13. 3. 1).²⁰² But numerous letters, instead of facilitating communication, distort it. As we have seen, writers of forged letters can be found east and west. The first instance of the misuse of epistolary communication occurs early in the *Histories*, in the camp of the rebellious Carthaginian mercenaries (1. 79. 9–10). The leaders, Matho, Spendius, and Autharitus the Gaul, want to excite the hatred of the troops against the Carthaginians. They arrange for a

²⁰⁰ Zecchini 2003: 415. Part and parcel of this is the fact that the opposition *logos/ergon* has now become an opposition *grammata/erga*. So in the fragment at 9. 20. 3, an appeal for help, to be dated c.210 BC: εἴπερ οὖν βούλονται μὴ τοῖς γράμμασι μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις τηρεῖν τὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς συμμαχίαν...; so also at 11. 5. 2–3, in the speech of Thrasycrates of Rhodes, where the antithesis is twice repeated. At 4. 24. 5, remonstrances in words or in writing are opposed by Philip V to enforcing redress.

²⁰¹ The note to Demetrius inscribed on a πιττάκιον or writing tablet, on which Polybius puts his seal, is mentioned at 41. 13. 8–14. 1. (It led to Demetrius' escape in 163/162.) But Polybius is anyway an author very much present within the *Histories*; and of course his own personal trajectory epitomizes the idea of mobility.

²⁰² Polybius' text here is very fragmentary, but Polyæn. 5. 17 preserves a very Herodotean stratagem (strongly reminiscent of the story of Zopyrus, Hdt. 3. 150–60), which must have taken place in this context: Heracleides, one of the friends of the king, mutilates himself and then runs away from the palace of the king to Rhodes, where he asks for protection from the king, whom he prevented (allegedly) from making an unjust war against the Rhodians. As proof Heracleides shows a letter from Philip, addressed to the Cretans, declaring his intention of launching war against the Rhodians. The Rhodians thus welcome him. Heracleides proceeds to set fire to their dockyards, destroy their navy, and go back to Macedon, where he becomes one of the first friends of Philip. Heracleides is mentioned in Polybius as having received the order to destroy the Rhodian fleet (Plb. 13. 4); the anecdote thus probably goes back to him. If so, Prandi 2003: 380 simplifies excessively when she writes that the Greek and Macedonian letters are official ones, whereas those concerning Syria and Egypt, meant for a limited circulation, are almost always forgeries: the Antigonids could also make use of forged official letters.

first false letter to come, as if from Sardinia, and they produce the courier and his letter at the assembly; then, a second courier comes, this time from Tunis, reinforcing the message, with the result that the mercenaries cut Gisgo and the other Carthaginian prisoners to pieces. The content of the letters is very briefly summarized, but their effect is deadly. The next cluster of forged letters concerns the Hellenistic courts of Macedon, Egypt, and Syria. At the beginning of book 4, Polybius emphasized the fact that the almost simultaneous accession to the throne, between 223 and 221 BC, of Philip V in Macedon, Ptolemy IV Philopator in Egypt, and Antiochus III in Syria marked a watershed (4. 2); books 4 and 5 are dedicated to introducing the three monarchs and their courts.²⁰³ In all three courts, real or forged letters circulate among courtiers, again with deadly results. The narrative begins with Philip V and the Antigonid court. As we already had occasion to note, Megaleas' treasonous letters to the Aetolians are intercepted—this results in Megaleas' death, and in the demise of Apelles, who had been behind these intrigues from the start (5. 28).²⁰⁴ Then, the Lagid court comes into focus. Sosibius, the powerful minister of Ptolemy, manages to eliminate Cleomenes of Sparta by bribing a Messenian, Nicagoras, and convincing him to write a letter, to be sent to Sosibius himself, accusing Cleomenes of intending to revolt against the king (5. 37–8). Right after this affair, the focus shifts to the Seleucids. Their court is the one most beset by forged letter writing, a situation brought about by the fact that the power is fragmented, with a young king, Antiochus III, and two usurpers, Molon in the upper satrapies and Achaeus in Asia Minor. Each one of these power centres is involved, actively or passively, in treasonous epistolary exchanges. In order to reinforce his hold over the king, the powerful Seleucid minister Hermias prepares a forged letter, as if from Achaeus (in 223 BC, when this is happening, Achaeus is still loyal), showing that Ptolemy was ready to support Achaeus in the attempt to assume the royal title. He then presents the letter to the king to prove his point that Achaeus is going to secede (Plb. 5. 42. 7: *ἐπιστολὴν πλάσας ὡς παρ' Ἀχαιοῦ διαπεσταλμένην προσήνεγκε τῷ βασιλεῖ, διασαφύουσιν ὅτι Πτολεμαῖος αὐτὸν παρακαλεῖ κτλ.*). The king accepts that what is written is true (*ὁ μὲν βασιλεὺς πιστεύσας τοῖς γραφομένοις...*, 5. 42. 8) and makes his decisions accordingly.²⁰⁵ Meanwhile, Molon gains the full support of his officers by holding out the prospect of booty, and by showing them false letters full of menaces and threats, as if from Antiochus, so as to thwart any thoughts of reconciliation (5. 43. 1). Finally, when Hermias realizes that he must rid himself of the successful general Epigenes, he devises a Palamedian plot. He forges a letter, as if from the usurper Molon, and persuades one of Epigenes' slaves to put it among the other papers of Epigenes; he then sends a certain Alexis, the commander of the fortress of Apamea, who is privy to the plot, to ask Epigenes whether he has received any letters from Molon. On Epigenes' denial, Alexis enters the room and looks among

²⁰³ On the 'subtlety of presentation' and careful design of books 4 and 5 see McGing 2010: 97–127.

²⁰⁴ Polybius does not express any opinion as to the authenticity of the letters (and anyway he dislikes Megaleas and the courtiers around Apelles), but I find fascinating Thornton's idea that the letters might have been forged in order to ruin Megaleas: Thornton 2002: 439. On the background (the struggle within Philip V's court) see the comments of Thornton 2002: 419, with further bibliography.

²⁰⁵ Note that according to Walbank 1957: 573 and Schmitt 1964: 161–4 the letter might have been authentic. This makes Polybius' epistolary choices all the more interesting.

the papers—and with the letter in hand, he immediately kills Epigenes, depriving the latter of the chance to defend himself.²⁰⁶

These books focus on intrigue within the Hellenistic courts. As McGing comments: ‘There seems to have been a rash of forging. It was presumably easy to do. I am not suggesting that it did not happen in any particular case, but I wonder if it is not also something of a commonplace: it is what evil courtiers do.’²⁰⁷ Indeed: these two books of Polybius offer a very specific angle on the life of the Hellenistic court. It cannot be coincidence that they are followed by a book devoted to the Roman constitution, which is devoid of such intrigues. This is in part due to the topic, of course, but also highlights the contrast between the Hellenistic courts and Rome.²⁰⁸ Likewise, there are relatively few explicit reports of letters in the first three books, although these do contain references to long-distance communication (expressed through forms of *πέμπω*, ‘to send’, people or messages or news, which, when they arrive, ‘show clearly’, *διασαφένω*, the same term used for the letters). Narrative construction is clearly at work here: Polybius (as it were) obliquely operates with an ‘ethics of epistolary communication’, which he uses to demarcate cultural differences. The courtiers of the Antigonid, Lagid, and Seleucid courts write forged or treasonous letters; such letters also circulate in ‘post-Hiero’ Syracuse; they are used by mercenaries, and in general by adventurers. Conversely, besides the Carthaginians and marginal populations such as the Gerrhaei, the groups that are not directly involved in internal power struggles by means of forged letters (at least in what survives of Polybius) are the Romans and the Greek cities, even though they employ letters as a means of communication. Some caution is, however, necessary: a modern reader encounters two difficulties here. First, the participation of Rome in epistolary exchanges becomes more intense in the later books of Polybius, but these are precisely the ones which are very fragmentary. And then one must allow for the possibility that the way in which Polybius looked at the protagonists may have changed over time.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Plb. 5. 50. 11–13: (Epigenes) *γράφας ὡς παρὰ Μόλωνος ἀπεσταλμένην ἐπιστολήν πρὸς τὸν Ἐπιγένην πείθει τινὰ τῶν ἐκείνου παίδων ἐλπίσι μεγάλας ψυχαγωγήσας εἰσεύγκαντα πρὸς τὸν Ἐπιγένην καταμίξαι τὴν ἐπιστολήν τοῖς ἐκείνου γράμμασιν. οὐ γενομένου παρὴν εὐθέως Ἀλεξίς, καὶ διηρώτα τὸν Ἐπιγένην μὴ τινὰς ἐπιστολὰς κεκόμισται παρὰ τοῦ Μόλωνος. τοῦ δ’ ἀπειπομένου πικρῶς ἐρευνᾶν ἤτει. ταχὺ δὲ παρεισελθὼν εὗρε τὴν ἐπιστολήν, ἣ χρησάμενος ἀφορμὴ παραχρῆμα τὸν Ἐπιγένην ἀπέκτεινε.*

²⁰⁷ McGing 2010: 118. Forged documents appear also in the later books: a notable instance is the forged (so Polybius) testament with which Sosibius and Agathocles proclaim themselves tutors of the young Ptolemy V, Plb. 15. 25. 4; other examples in Prandi 2003; Zecchini 2003.

²⁰⁸ Troiani 1979; Virgilio 2011: 30.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Walbank 1985b [1977]. Other Roman letters (all reasonably straightforward): e.g. the letter from Lucius and Publius Scipiones sent to Lucius Aemilius Regulus and Eumenes, then in Samos, 21. 8. 2; the letter from Rome ordering the liberation of the Aetolian envoys held by Charadrus, 21. 26. 77; the letter sent by Gnaeus in the winter of 189/188 to Quintus Fabius Labeo after the treaty between Antiochus and the Romans, 21. 44. 3; the letter by Marcus Lepidus to the Achaeans, 22. 3. 1; the arrival of Lacedaemonian exiles with a letter from the senate to the Achaeans, 24. 2. 1 (this same letter is declared to have been written by the senate only because of the importuning of the exiles by Bippus and other ambassadors returning from Rome, with the result that the Achaeans take no account of it, 24. 2. 4—a decision which will have grave consequences); the letter sent by Appius Cento from Epirus to the Achaeans asking for troops, 28. 13. 6–8. And these are fragmentary books.

The Greek perception of Roman practice in the use of letters for interstate relations comes out clearly from an incident narrated in book 27. We are in 171 BC: the Roman praetor Lucretius Gallus, at anchor in Cephallenia, sends a letter to the Rhodians through a certain Socrates, a gymnastic trainer, asking for ships. As the letter arrives and is presented for discussion, the majority initially tends towards a positive answer. But some Rhodians who are dissatisfied with the favour shown to Rome try to shift the mood of the assembly, by—among other things—disparaging the letter (τὴν ἐπιστολὴν διέσυρον). They pretend that it comes not from Rome but from Eumenes, who is trying to force them into an unnecessary war. As proof they adduce ‘the low station of the man who had arrived bearing the letter, the Romans not being in the habit of proceeding thus, but, as regards their communications on such matters, employing excessive care and ceremony. They said this, well knowing Lucretius to be the author of the letter’ (Plb. 27. 7. 1–10). This is interesting on two counts: first, the politicians (and their public) evince no qualms in ascribing to a Hellenistic king, Eumenes in this instance, the idea of making use of a forged letter for his own purposes; second, there is a general sense of the seriousness with which the Romans employ written communication.²¹⁰ At the same time, the Romans too are not beyond ‘tweaking’ reality: the letter sent not much later by Marcius Philippus to the Achaeans in 169/168 BC (Plb. 29. 25) contains a statement which Polybius says that he knew presented a distorted view of the situation even as the letter was being read, since indeed the Romans had sent Numisius to reconcile the Ptolemies and Antiochus IV, but Numisius had failed in his attempt.²¹¹

As for the Greek cities, they are certainly aware of letters, and not just as recipients of them. Cities make use of letters for internal communications: for example, Polybius twice cites dispatches of Rhodian naval admirals; cities, or at least the leagues, can also utilize letters to organize a complex network, as is shown in the story narrated in detail in book 16 of Philopoemen’s expedition against Tegea (16. 36–7). The year is 200 BC. Philopoemen, the *strategos* of the Achaean league, is organizing a march of all the allies towards Tegea. But because the spies of the tyrant Nabis of Sparta are everywhere, he makes use of the following stratagem. He writes letters to all the cities in the alliance, and sends them first to the cities farthest from Tegea, in such a way that each city would also receive the (sealed) letters addressed to the other cities located between them and Tegea. In the first group of letters he had written: ‘On receiving this letter you will make all of military age assemble at once in the market-place for five days, with their equipment, provisions for five days, and money for as many. As soon as all those present are collected, take them with you to the next city, and on arrival there you will hand the letter addressed to it to their commanding officer and obey

²¹⁰ This emerges also from another, earlier episode, the refusal of the Achaeans to acquiesce in Caecilius’ request to summon the assembly, because ‘they were prevented from doing so by the laws, as Caecilius was neither the bearer of letters from the senate nor would he show to their magistrates his written instructions’ (μήτε γράμματα φέρειν αὐτὸν παρὰ (τῆς) συγκλήτου μήτε τὰς ἐντολὰς ἐγγράπτους ἐθέλειν δοῦναι τοῖς ἀρχουσιν, 22. 12. 7, cf. 22. 10. 10–12): this is a subterfuge, of course, but written documents are important. See Prandi 2003: 387–9, who emphasizes the importance of ‘writtleness’ in Polybius.

²¹¹ But as Zecchini 2003: 417 stresses, Polybius here is more interested in his own personal reaction to the letter when it was read than in the letter itself.

the instructions contained in it' (Plb. 16. 36. 3–4). Each letter contains the name of the next city to be reached; in this way, no one can know the final destination of the march. Moreover, Polybius adds, the letters had been sent out timed in such a way that everyone would converge on Tegea at the same moment. This is one of the rare instances in which Polybius cites the exact content of a letter; he must have been deeply impressed with Philopoemen's stratagem.²¹² Another instance of a letter sent by a Greek community is when Andriscus (the false Philip) makes himself master of Macedonia. The Thessalians then send letters and ambassadors to the Achaeans, asking for help (36. 10. 5, in c.149 BC). However, apart from such instances, letters from Greek cities do not seem to play a significant role in the *Histories*.

Thornton is thus probably right when he states that the bleak representation of life at the Hellenistic court also reflects Polybius' loyalty to the republican and democratic traditions of the Greek poleis.²¹³ At the same time, Greek individuals who are in all senses still part of the world of the Greek poleis may be deeply involved with the kings: after the defeat of Perseus, the letters that the king had exchanged with Deinon and Polyaratus of Rhodes—both the letters of Perseus to them and theirs to him, Polybius says—are intercepted and made public (τῶν γραμμάτων ἐαλωκότων καὶ πεφωτισμένων).²¹⁴

Some further observations may be added, to complete the picture of how Polybius employs epistolary communication in his work. Two Roman letters, both linked to the Scipiones, belong to a category in themselves. In book 10, Polybius mentions an autobiographical letter of Scipio Africanus addressed to Philip V (10. 9. 3); his purpose in referring to this document is to support his interpretation of the true character and the forethought of Scipio against those that regard Scipio's successes as dependent on the gods and on fortune.²¹⁵ Clearly, Polybius is here using the letter as a document to support a specific point of view or interpretation. Similarly in the context of a discussion of the naval battle of Lade (c.200 BC), Polybius refers to the dispatch sent home by the generals, which he says was kept in the prytaneum, the official archive, at Rhodes (τῆς ἐπιστολῆς ἔτι μενούσης ἐν τῷ πρυτανείῳ). He cites this as evidence against Zeno and Antisthenes' interpretation of the events (16. 15. 8). In this second case, it is possible, but not necessary to suppose that he saw the letter;²¹⁶ but in both cases, the letter is used as a document to provide evidence for an argument, something that is

²¹² As Manuela Mari points out to me (*per litteras*), in Polybius' world a good statesman must be also a military commander; but a good military commander should be able to make skilful use of communication, including written communication. Much earlier, Themistocles had also been able to play with both written and oral communication (see above).

²¹³ Thornton 2002: 439; see also 434.

²¹⁴ Plb. 30. 8. Interestingly, they were written in cipher; but Polybius does not trouble himself with details of the cipher, or with the exact content.

²¹⁵ Walbank 1967: 204 reasonably suggests that Polybius had access to it through Aemilianus: 'for had published versions circulated in Rome, Cicero would surely have known of them, whereas he writes that nothing remains of such an ingenium. (*off.* 3. 4)'. This was therefore a 'private', personal letter, which never circulated. It was probably written by Scipio after he and Philip V became friends in 190 BC. Cf. the commentary of Beck 2013, *ad* BNJ 232 F 1.

²¹⁶ See Pédech 1964: 379–80, Walbank 1967: 520, and the ample discussion in Zecchini 2003: 418–19. The same applies to another dispatch sent by a Rhodian general, Theophiliscus, right after the battle of Chios, and mentioned slightly earlier at 16. 9. 1.

rarely the case elsewhere.²¹⁷ Finally, Polybius gives a long and very detailed summary of the letter addressed by the two Scipiones to Prusias, the king of Bithynia, in 190 BC (21. 11). This is an important document. It gives an outline of the Roman policy towards the Hellenistic kings, mentioning very specific cases, both in the west (Andobales and Colichas in Spain, Massanissa in Africa, and Pleuratus in Illyria, all examples of kings whom Rome made greater than they were) and in Greece (Philip V and Nabis, both of whom were not crushed by the Romans after their defeat). If Polybius decided to dedicate so much space to this letter and make it the turning point in Prusias' political strategy, it may have been done as a gesture towards the two Scipiones aimed at highlighting their diplomatic ability, and because the text was available to him in the archive of Scipio Aemilianus. We are, however, dealing with a unique instance.²¹⁸

Polybius' *Histories* thus reflect a world in which letters circulate; but what primarily matters is that people are part of a larger network of communication. While in the first part of the *Histories* the majority of letters concern the Hellenistic kings and their courts, as the *Histories* advance more and more letters from Rome appear. Most are official ones, although there are also some from individuals (e.g. the letter of Scipio Africanus to Philip V). The *Histories* reveal that private individuals in Greek cities joined in the power game, and might write letters in cipher (to which kings replied in kind); on the other hand, official letters from Greek cities (as opposed to internal reports) remained extremely rare, and appear to have been straightforward in their purposes.

The content of most letters is not deemed important enough to be quoted but is usually simply summarized.²¹⁹ They are thus not significant *qua* letters: an oral message would have accomplished the same purpose. What matters is that the message is conveyed. It is then all the more interesting that Polybius insists on stressing that these are *letters*: writing has by now a specific value of its own (*πειθαρχεῖτε τοῖς ἐγγεγραμμένοις*, as Philopoemen had stated). And yet there is a tension here, since in quite a few instances the writing proves mendacious, or simply not adjusted to reality.²²⁰

At the same time certain epistolary themes, such as the use of forged letters or treasonous arrangements conducted through letters, are used by Polybius to highlight patterns of behaviour that he disapproves of. The clusters of treasonous letters at specific points in the narrative carry implications that go beyond their contents: such treasonous letters help construct a specific image of the Hellenistic courts, as well as of the difficulties into which cities might run when divided between parties. In Polybius, good leaders, good generals, good kings should not

²¹⁷ Pédech 1964: 387–9; Zecchini 2003: 418–20.

²¹⁸ Detailed discussion in Zecchini 2003: 419–22. References to other letters of the Scipiones and wider discussion of their archive in Pédech 1964: 380–2.

²¹⁹ Possibly in agreement with Polybius' expressly stated policy as concerns speeches, to give their main point: Walbank 1985a [1965]: 248–9, 252; Usher 2009.

²²⁰ Mendacious: e.g. the forged letter in which Antiochus trusts (*ὁ μὲν βασιλεὺς πιστεύσας τοῖς γραφομένοις*), 5. 42. 8; the truthful but misused letters of Achaëus' friends, 8. 17; the false will of Ptolemy IV Philopator, 15. 25. 4. See Prandi 2003: 386–9 for a larger contextualization, involving other types of—official—documents.

attract plots;²²¹ but when the three main Hellenistic kingdoms are introduced for the first time in the fourth and fifth books, they are marked by plotting, and a plotting that furthermore utilizes epistolary means. Some Herodotean themes thus resonate strongly in Polybius' treatment of epistolary communication.²²² How far the picture presented by the fourth and fifth book would have changed in the rest of the *Histories* is difficult to tell because of the fragmentary state of books 6–40. It is, however, notable that those who deal in forgeries and treason are mainly the courtiers; the kings may be aware of what is happening, but usually (in Polybius' presentation) they do not have a direct hand in the affair. On the contrary, Polybius characterizes as truly royal the decision of Philip V, on the night following his defeat at Cynoscephalae, to send one of his aides-de-camp to Larisa to destroy and burn the royal correspondence (18. 33. 1–3). Philip was 'acting like a true king in not forgetting his duty even in the hour of disaster' (ποιῶν πράγμα βασιλικόν τὸ μὴδ' ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς λήθην ποιεῖσθαι τοῦ καθήκοντος), for he was well aware of the fact that these documents would give the Romans much material against himself and his friends if they fell into their hands.

4.5. CONCLUSION

I began with a contrastive analysis of oral and written communication in Herodotus. In his *Histories*, oral and written messages are couched in exactly the same terms. Near Eastern kings and tyrants show a marked tendency towards the use of epistolary communication, in contrast to the Greek habit of sending messengers (ἄγγελοι or κήρυκες). Most of the letters mentioned by Herodotus are recorded not because of their import, but because of external elements such as a peculiar support (the tattooed head of a slave, a wooden tablet covered with wax), their unusual means of conveyance (the letter sent to Cyrus within a hare, a note attached to an arrow), or their falsity.

In Thucydides, the number of letters is still limited. A good half of them concern communication with Persia. The others belong to the Greek world; more specifically, they originate with the Athenians and the Spartans (e.g. the long letter of Nicias and the flurry of written exchanges in book 8). I have suggested that these letters are either private letters by individuals seeking power or advantage (which applies also to some of those concerning Persia), or internal communications, such as dispatches from generals to their cities—a practice for which we have evidence also from other sources. There is a specific rationale in Nicias' choice of sending a letter; otherwise, the most frequent reason for an epistolary choice seems to be plotting. Thus, the relatively high number of letters in Book 8 could be interpreted as a symptom of the unfinished state of that book, but also as a sign of a change: while in the first part of the *Peloponnesian*

²²¹ McGing 2010: 96–7. Significantly, the rift between the two sons of Philip V, announced early on in the *Histories*, will cause the death of Demetrius (in c.180 BC), also through a forged letter sealed with a counterfeit of T. Quintius' seal (Livy 40. 23–4, with Walbank 1979: 254 and 257).

²²² See McGing 2010: 52–8 (with further reference) for the presence of a Herodotean influence. McGing does not, however, discuss communication.

War communication is mainly face-to-face open speech or formalized communication through heralds, the second part is marked by the emergence of a dysfunctional pattern of written communication that favours secrecy and trouble-making over direct interaction.

The work of Xenophon does not mark any significant change in the treatment of written communication. Relatively few letters are mentioned in the *Hellenica*, and as in Thucydides, these letters concern only Sparta, Athens, and Persia. The *Agésilas* offers a significant statement of the difference between private and official letter writing. As for Xenophon's works on Persia, letters and written communication figure more prominently, in line with the traditional Greek understanding of Persia; again, epistolary deviousness figures side by side with examples of letters that are straightforward. With Ctesias, a change is noticeable, and not just because he presents us with the first instance of a suicide-note-cum-love-letter. Ctesias mentions in his work epistolary exchanges between Persians and Greeks, Athenians and Spartans, in the context of the power struggle in the Aegean; Photius' summary seems to imply a remarkable increase in the volume of written communication.

What can be gathered from the fragmentary remains of historians active between the fourth and the second century confirms the impression of a change, which can be appreciated in full in what remains of Polybius and which, with the appearance of *γραμματοφόροι*, extends even to the choice of vocabulary. In Polybius letters are ubiquitous: everyone writes them. Conversely, and strikingly, the time-honoured Herodotean oral messengers, *ἄγγελοι*, have all but disappeared. What has also disappeared is the Herodotean interest in the material support on which letters were written as one of the possibilities for tricking unintended addressees, an interest that speaks for a growing awareness of the possibilities of a means of communication that was still relatively new and untested. Polybius' letters (at least, those we have) are all on papyrus rather than on, say, the wood of a tablet covered with wax. It is now the text itself, rather than the support, that gets encrypted: in at least two instances, the narrative concerning Achaeus and that concerning Perseus, we see issues of life and death discussed through the employment of letters written in cipher. The long excursus of book 10. 43–7, where Polybius exposes a system he himself has perfected, attests to his interest in encrypted long-distance communication: it is thus all the more strange that although he mentions encrypted letters (and in one case, states that they were 'brought to light'), he makes no attempt at describing the specific type of cipher used. Possibly such encrypted exchanges were banal—or Polybius may only have heard of the letters, but not seen them. What remains is a sense that a devious use of writing marks the Hellenistic courts; but this is a pragmatic assessment, not an ideological one. To put it differently, writing devious letters is one of the symptoms of the plotting that afflicts the Hellenistic courtiers, as is forging documents; but other parties also make use of written communication, and although there is still a slight tension, the written document has by now imposed itself as the source to be trusted. Polybius showcases the treacherous purposes to which writing can be put; but he also emphasizes the potential of the written document to function as a guarantee of authenticity and power.

Part II

Letter Writing and the Polis

Writing and Letter Writing on the Athenian Dramatic Stage

The evidence discussed in the preceding chapters concerned the Greek world as a whole; it is time to introduce geographical distinctions, and look at the behaviour of specific poleis. As with so many aspects of ancient Greek culture, the polis that provides us with the most evidence about letter writing is Athens. It is in fact the only place where it is possible to study perceptions about letter writing and its representations between the fifth and fourth century BC, grounded in documents, literary or otherwise, that mainly address or concern its *politai*. In the following two chapters, therefore, the focus will be resolutely Athenocentric. We shall first look at drama, and then at the way the orators deal with letter writing. A third chapter, based this time mainly on epigraphical evidence, will allow us to contextualize the findings within the wider Greek world.

5.1. THEATRICAL LETTERS: TRAGEDY AND SATYR-PLAY

From the very beginning, images of, and references to, writing are part of drama.¹ Both the plays themselves and the archaeological record attest to the impact of writing on drama. A good instance of the latter is an intriguing Attic vase, a hydria dated to c.470 BC. On the vase Hermes, the messenger of the gods, appears holding in one hand a folded writing tablet and his *kerykeion*, while with the other hand he is dragging two reluctant old chorusmen, their mouths open in song, towards Dionysus.² The chorusmen wear corselets (but no other armour) and wreaths; Dionysus makes a welcoming gesture towards them. The writing-tablet figures in a rather prominent position, between the two gods: clearly, the image is making a special point of the association between the chorusmen's performance and writing, an association that will be taken for granted in later documents (for

¹ Segal (1985; 1986: 75–83) has suggested that alphabetic writing played an important role in the move from a predominantly sound-directed, oral mode of orientation (and from epic recitation) to a visually, spatially organized mode (and thus to drama); Wise 1998 offers a more radical version of the argument. References to writing in drama also reflect the new self-awareness of the dramatists.

² Hydria attributed to the Pan painter, now in St Petersburg, Hermitage B 201, ARV² 555. 95; see Siebert 1990, no. 892; Gasparri 1986, no. 846 and pl. 401; Nieddu 2004: 28–9; Hall 2006: 46–7; and especially Green 1994: 81–4 and 1995.

instance, on the ‘Pronomos vase’ of c.400 BC, a volute-crater celebrating a dramatic victory, the poet Demetrios holds nonchalantly a roll).³ What is the meaning of the tablet? And why a tablet rather than a papyrus roll? The latter would have been more appropriate for a text of the length of a tragedy. Among the various possibilities canvassed by Green two stand out. The tablet might have symbolized writing more readily than a roll in the eyes of the audience: the image of writing on the tablets of the mind is frequently used as a metaphor for firm remembrance in drama. Alternatively, the painter may be reflecting contemporary practice: the tablet may represent a ‘temporary’, partial script. But as Green acknowledges, Hermes and his tablet might also refer to something quite different, as for instance the votes of the judges.⁴ Thus, this vase shows that writing had already in the 470s a place of sorts in the theatre; but its exact role in this image and its status in contemporary dramatic performances are still very much unclear.

We are on safer ground with references to writing within the plays. Already in *Persians*, the earliest surviving play (brought on the stage in 472 BC), the messenger may have used an image borrowed from writing to deliver his news: he unrolls (or opens up) the sufferings of the Persians, as if they had been inscribed on a papyrus roll or on folded tablets.⁵ However, the only pointers towards such an interpretation are the general context (a report listing casualties), and the verb ἀναπτύσσω (‘open out, unfold’), which is in itself non-specific. The passage in *Persians* well illustrates one of the difficulties facing a study of the connotations of writing in tragedy: the allusive character of references to writing. Because of the setting of the plays in the heroic age (*Persians* is actually one of the very few exceptions), references to writing in tragedy tend to be vague, or confined to aspects that would not be felt as anachronistic: thus, while certain types of written documents are tendentially avoided on the tragic scene, letters are admitted, simply because they fit the atmosphere better.⁶

Granted this general limitation, there is a further difficulty: what can we expect, as historians, from a study of the references to (and connotations of) letter writing in tragedy? A literary study will focus on how the letters function, on how skilfully they are inserted in the plot, on the way they advance the action—these are legitimate lines of enquiry arising out of narratological concerns, to which answers can be given. But what of their meaning? Where does writing fit in the relationship between drama and the society that produced it, what do the presence and

³ Volute-crater Naples, MN 81673, H3240, ARV² 1336.1, 1704; for detailed discussion of this extraordinary vase, see the essays in Taplin and Wyles 2010.

⁴ Green 1995: 80–5.

⁵ Aesch. *Pers.* 254: ὅμως δ’ ἀνάγκη πᾶν ἀναπτύξαι πάθος, cf. 294–5 (Atossa orders: πᾶν δ’ ἀναπτύξας πάθος | λέξον καταστάς), and 333 (ἀναστρέψας πάλιν), with Hall 1996: 130, Barrett 2002: 49 n. 42, Garvie 2009: 148. ἀναπτύσσω means in general ‘to open’, but here the context (messenger report) may inflect the meaning. In Aesch. fr. 281a 22 Radt, ἀναπτύσσω is used for ‘opening the pinax’; compare Soph. *El.* 639 (μῦθος . . . ἀναπτύξαι), as well as διαπτύσσω (to examine) in Eur. *Hipp.* 935, and the frequent references in tragedy to ‘folds’ of a tablet, δέλτου πτυχάς or διαπτυχάς; for prose, Hdt. 1. 125, ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον.

⁶ Easterling 1985: 3–6. Hall 2006: 47 overstates the case, when she speaks of ‘the remarkably uninhibited way in which the tragedians import examples of writing and metaphors connected with it into their heroic world’. Cf. the thoughtful reflections of Ford 2002: 152–7.

connotations of writing in drama tell us about that society?⁷ An initial answer is that the enhanced presence of certain types of writing on the scene reflects a wider familiarity with them. Of course there is no need to go through a detailed analysis of Attic tragedy to realize that by the end of the fifth century literacy was fairly widespread in the Greek world, and that letters in particular circulated; but tragedy allows us to see, as in a (distorting) mirror, how literacy 'filtered through', how it entered into, and eventually occupied, both scenes, the dramatic one and that of the polis.

An answer that better addresses the problem of the distorting mirror might take as its point of departure the problem of anachronism. If the playwrights introduced references to writing, notwithstanding the fact that these could have been felt as anachronisms, then writing must have mattered to them and to their audience—or at any rate, it must have been an important part of the conceptual landscape.⁸ Tragedy brings on stage the heroic age, but it is concerned with the polis, inasmuch as it offers a sustained reflection on the discourse of the city as expressed in myth, ritual, festivals, and political institutions (including explicit statements of civic ideals or ideologies). We may thus hope that a scrutiny of the types of writing referred to in drama, of the specific contexts in which these writings appear (e.g. as parallel to spoken discourse, or in opposition to it), and of the connotations that their appearances suggest, will tell us something about the connotations of writing in contemporary society.

As a general rule, references to writing may appear in tragedy for at least four reasons. First, writing may be mentioned as one element of the surrounding conceptual landscape, shared in an unproblematic way by playwright and audience, although not really having a functional role within the plot. Second, writing may feature in a tragic play because of the aesthetic effect which results from bringing a written document of one type or another. Such a prop may render a given scene more effective, serve to advance the plot, or trigger metatheatrical associations. These two possibilities make sense on their own, and they are enough

⁷ There is debate as to the forms the relationship between drama and society took (see e.g. Goldhill 1987; Griffin 1998; Seaford 2000; Goldhill 2000; Rhodes 2003; P. Wilson 2009; Ceccarelli 2010), but the connection is not in doubt: 'poetry, like all forms of art, . . . expresses and involves the interweaving, explicit or implicit, of all the codes of the society, linguistic, ritual, familial, sexual, alimentary, and so on. This network of interwoven codes determines how we perceive and experience what we call reality. The poet cannot but utilize and to some degree conform to that pre-coded structuring of experience; to some degree he also goes beyond it, examines it, reflects upon it' (Segal 1985: 199). A concise discussion of the various models, metaphors, and theories pressed into service to describe the relationship between theatre and society can be found in Hall 2006: 1–6.

⁸ Wise: 1998: 17 n. 6 gives a 'raw' list of references to 'reading, writing, books, inscriptions, letters and waxed tablets' in tragedy: her thirty-nine instances (and the list is not complete: Sophocles' *Poimenēs* is missing, for instance) are enough to show the importance of writing's presence. Writing mattered for the playwrights (and for drama) in a very basic way: it is commonly agreed, notwithstanding Havelock 1982: 261–313 and 1985, that tragedy was composed in a written form, and that actors would probably memorize written texts (see Wise 1998: 65; Hall 2006: 44–7, esp. 47 for the notion that the writing out of actors' lines may have affected the way in which drama represents this craft). It is rather natural that a degree of self-reflection on the medium that made its performance possible would enter the genre of tragedy (Segal 1985: 209, 213–17). But again, this is a feeble explanation: drama was not an egocentric exercise on the part of the playwrights. The audience mattered. On the nature of the latter, see Sommerstein 1997; Torrance 2010: 249–50.

to explain why there is writing in drama. The first of these possibilities suffices to justify interest in tracing its workings, beyond the narratological.

But, third, in bringing writing on the scene the playwright may also have had in mind a reflection on his own discourse, on the status of tragedy as compared to other types of commemorative monuments (statues, paintings, temples), practices (rituals), and poetry or speeches, oral and written. Finally, this same reflection may have addressed issues widely shared: a dramatist in bringing writing on the scene may have had specific issues in mind that would have interrogated the audience, or presented issues to which the audience could relate. Truth and falsehood, imitation, the relationship between *physis* and *nomos*, persuasion and communication, that is, language and its power, the meaning of words, are central to drama; writing, as the 'double' of speech, is bound to have been involved too.⁹

In what follows, references to writing will first be contextualized within the play; their socio-cultural connotations will be examined only in a second step. The importance of interpreting as a whole multiple references to various types of writing within a single play (metaphorical writing, real writing, writing as painting, official or public writing, books, letters) is the reason why I have preferred a rather traditional division by authors to a thematic subdivision: the latter was attractive indeed, and would have been unproblematic for those plays containing only a single reference to writing, or for the fragments, but it would not have allowed for the treatment as a whole of, say, the *Oresteia*, the *Trachiniae*, or the *Hippolytus*, to cite only one example from each section below. I want, however, to stress that no 'evolutionist' vision is implied in the articulation.

I have made one exception to my examination by author, namely, for those plays that brought the letters of the alphabet on the stage *qua* individual letters: these plays are discussed as a group, because the preserved fragments seem to present very strong intertextual links between themselves, because the fragmentary state of the specific passages anyway prevents further contextualization within the play, and because they are all preserved by one source, Athenaeus, which at least provides an ancient context of sorts. The discussion also includes those instances in which words formed on the *γραφ-* stem are used to indicate a painting, because the fact that the same words were used for both 'to paint' and 'to write' tells us something central about the way writing is looked at. The remark that *γραφή* means both 'writing' and 'painting' has often been the starting-point for inquiries into the 'decorative' use of writing on Attic vases (for instance), or for inquiries into the status and interplay at the conceptual level of the various types of signs on these same vases (images, words, and the further level of signification evoked by the scene in its entirety).¹⁰ But just as writing is an 'image', images are a

⁹ Once a decision had been taken in a public debate, it was usually inscribed on stone, and put in a public place, 'for whoever wants to observe'; records of temple administrators and lists of all sorts could be seen on display, just as dedicatory or funerary epigrams. In all these instances, writing functions as an independent power, but it is also the residuum of words once pronounced and meant to be repeated. See e.g. Faraguna 2006: 54–5, and below.

¹⁰ See the seminal papers by Lissarrague, 1985 and 1992 ('*Graphein: écrire et dessiner*'); Neer 1995 (esp. the analysis of the Hermitage *pelike* with the first swallow, 132–3); Neer 1998. Both Lissarrague and Neer see a change around the mid-fifth century: in the archaic period all signs function in the same way: 'the painters treat letters and pictures as different aspects of a single phenomenon' (Neer 1998: 18). With the development of new techniques (foreshortening, landscape, depth) and in short of a more

means of preserving and transmitting information; and references to images through the specific word *γραφή* may legitimately be put in a series with other references to ‘writing’.¹¹ Only those images referred to with words of the *γραφ*-stem will be considered: the focus is on writing, not visualization.¹²

Against sweeping statements to the effect that in drama writing is very often negatively marked, feminine, undemocratic, or conversely, democratic, I suggest that the evidence defies such generalizations. Rather, the ideological connotations of writing as a cultural practice differ drastically in our surviving scripts, depending on the context and the *type* of writing at issue; a monolithic interpretation is not adequate. Of course, what we have is only a minimal percentage of all that was performed on the Athenian stage, and this has to be borne in mind when trying to delineate changes or innovations. However, if we are allowed to take what survives as a representative sample, the way different types of writing are referred to in tragedy is in itself revealing; not least, it gives us clues as to how writing, and specifically letter writing, are positioned with respect to the spoken word.

5.1.1. Aeschylus

Writing is present to a greater or lesser degree in all of Aeschylus’ plays (*Persians* being the one potential exception), often as a metaphor for memory, often to refer to a painting, but also as literal writing.¹³ We cannot know whether it was listed among Palamedes’ inventions in the homonymous play; but it certainly occupies a special place in the *Prometheus* transmitted among Aeschylus’ plays. Some fluidity between the series of inventions attributed to each character had been noticed already by a scholiast to the *Prometheus Vincitus*, who in discussing vv. 457ff. (i.e. exactly that part of the list of inventions dealing with the rising and setting of stars, the science of numbers, and writing) remarked: ‘He [Aeschylus] has also ascribed the discovery of these things to Palamedes’ (τούτων τὴν εὑρεσιν καὶ Παλαμέδῃ προσήψεν, schol. Aesch. PV 457 = Aesch fr. 182a Radt).¹⁴ Indeed, the discovery of numbers is mentioned in almost the same words in the *Prometheus vincitus* (vv. 459–60: καὶ μὲν ἀριθμὸν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων, | ἐξηῦρον αὐτοῖς) and in fr. 181a 3–4 Radt, from the *Palamedes* (πρῶτα μὲν τὸν πάνσοφον | ἀριθμὸν ἡῦρηκε,

mimetic art, inscriptions and images part company: naturalistic painting emphasizes issues of ambiguity, while inscriptions, reduced to their linguistic function, tend to offer interpretive stability to the uncertain pictures.

¹¹ Segal 1985: 223 (‘In some texts of tragedy . . . the notion of painting has associations with the ambiguous “truth” of writing’) is one of the rare explicit acknowledgements of this; Wright 2005: 318–19 another. Tellingly, in quite a few instances interpreters disagree as to whether the *γραφαί* being discussed are paintings or writings; see below.

¹² The issue of visualization has been addressed by Froma Zeitlin in numerous essays; Zeitlin 1994 is particularly pertinent. See also Steiner 2001: 44–56; Hall 2006: 99–141; Stieber 2011, *passim*.

¹³ Metaphor: besides *Persians*, mentioned above, see Aesch. *Suppl.* 179; 708–9, and 991–2; *Choeph.* 450 and 699; *Eum.* 275; *PV* 789. Painting: Aesch. *Agam.* 242, 801, and 1329. Literal writing: Aesch. *Sept.* 434, 468, 646, 660; the *Dike* fragment, fr. 281a Radt.

¹⁴ More precisions as to the three slightly different versions of this scholion, and their exact location in the various manuscripts, in Radt’s apparatus; cf. the remarks of Sommerstein 2008, fr. 181a.

ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων).¹⁵ Clearly there is some relationship between the two plays; and Sommerstein's suggestion that the list of inventions attributed to Prometheus derives from a similar list in a *Palamedes* play is attractive.¹⁶ But we do not know for certain whether Aeschylus attributed the invention of writing to Palamedes; and we have even less idea of what the purpose of the invention might have been.

The situation is different for the *Prometheus Vincitus*: writing, characterized as 'memory of everything, occupation mother of the Muses', is one of the inventions highlighted by Prometheus when listing his gifts to humanity (PV 460). The new *technē* finds a metaphorical application in the play itself, with the order addressed by the Titan to Io, to inscribe his words in the tablets of her mind (PV 789). In a fascinating, if slightly one-sided, analysis of the *Prometheus Vincitus*, Segal has described the meeting between Prometheus and Io as 'the confrontation of oral and written mentalities': a Prometheus in control, although fixed to his rock, is opposed to an Io who enters the scene running, without any sense of direction or time, exactly as men were before the Titan gave them writing, creatures who saw without seeing and heard without hearing (442–506).¹⁷ According to Segal, the suggestion of the Titan that Io 'write down on the remembering tablets of her mind' her travels (789) underlines the capacity of writing to give an orientation in time and space, to visualize in the inner mind what is being said. For Segal, the metaphor of writing into one's mind is closely linked to the visual: the move from the Homeric formula *σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι* to expressions having exactly the same meaning, but involving writing, signals the move from a memory attached to hearing and speech to a memory based on visualization.¹⁸

This applies, however, only up to a point. When asked by Io to provide her with details of her future travels, Prometheus obliges, dividing the information in two long *rheseis* (707–41 and 790–815). At the beginning of the first *rhesis*, the Titan exhorts the daughter of Inachus to 'put my words in your soul, so as to learn the end of your wanderings' (τοὺς ἐμοὺς λόγους θυμῷ βάλ', ὥς ἂν τέρματ' ἐκμάθῃς ὁδοῦ, 705–6). After a pause, asked to complete the picture of Io's wandering, the Titan accepts, and requires again of Io that she memorizes what he will say. But this time he also suggests that this memory is to be assimilated to a written one: 'First, Io, I shall tell you of your much-driven wandering, and may you inscribe it on the memory-tablets of your mind' (πολύδοον πλάνην φράσω, ἣν ἐγγράφου σὺ

¹⁵ Similarly, the opening of Prometheus' *rhesis*, with its accent on the confused state of mankind (Aesch. PV 449–50), finds a parallel in fr. 181a Radt (PV 449–50: τὸν μακρὸν βίον | ἔφυρον εἰκῇ πάντα ~ fr. 181a Radt: βίον... ὄντα πρὶν πεφυρμένον). Stobaeus, who quoted fr. 181a Radt directly after the verses 454–9 of Aeschylus' *Prometheus*, had already made the connection (see Radt's apparatus). Further Sommerstein 2000: 122; Gera 2003: 120–7, and esp. 123.

¹⁶ Sommerstein 2000; already Kleingünther 1933: 83 and n. 38, convincingly arguing that the move will have been from a Palamedes, already known for numerous, but circumscribed inventions, to the majestic Aeschylean Prometheus, bringer of all arts (*πάσαι τέχναι*, v. 506) to humanity. See also above, 66–7, 79.

¹⁷ Segal (1986): 84–6. For my purposes whether the *Prometheus Vincitus* is by Aeschylus is not important; see above, 67 n. 29; Said 1985; and West 1990: 51–72 (who denies Aeschylean authorship).

¹⁸ Segal 1986: 81. The invention of a mnemonic technique involving visual representation was attributed to Simonides, to whom was also ascribed the invention of some letters of the alphabet: see above, 66, and below, Appendix 2 nos. 1 and 6. Recent studies, however, have emphasized that visualization (in the form of a 'theatre of memory') is already at the basis of epic composition: see e.g. Clay 2011.

μνήμοσιν δέλοις φρενῶν, 788–9). The two expressions function in exactly the same way, to introduce a long description of places and names. The choice of a metaphorical writing to represent memorization in the introduction to the second *rhesis* may have had to do with the length and complexity of the details the girl is by now asked to retain, or with the fact that the information takes on an almost oracular colouring (especially this part, with her arrival to Egypt)—and oracles were typically written down;¹⁹ but there does not seem to be within the play any qualitative difference between ‘putting the words in one’s soul’ and ‘engraving them in the tablets of the mind’. However, the second request serves the purpose of showing one of the Titan’s inventions as it is being put into action; and the very existence of the play—from the point of view of the audience, its performance—is a metatextual instance of the other aspect of Prometheus’ gift, the production of poetry.

In the *Oresteia*, inscription in the mind and visual image, painting, appear side by side; notions expressed by γράφω and connected forms are used to link together characters and themes. The thread begins at the opening of the trilogy, when the chorus remembers Iphigenia and her sacrifice, the girl with her mouth kept closed by the silencing strength of the bit, and standing out, ‘as in a painting’, desiring to speak (πρέπουσά θ’ ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, προσεννέπειν | θέλουσ’, Ag. 242–3). Γράμματα speak, of course, although silently and in a mediated way, and can even scream, as we shall see with the shield scene of the *Seven* or the tablet of Phaedra. Iphigenia, standing out as if in a painting, speaks in two ways: although silenced by the bit in her mouth, she silently speaks through her glances; in the context of the trilogy, the image speaks through the network of relations built around it.²⁰

This happens next when the chorus, in greeting Agamemnon later in the play, admits that at the time he was assembling the army for Helen, the king had been described (or rather, depicted) to him most unfavourably, nor steering the helm of his mind rightly (κάρτ’ ἀπομούσως ἦσθα γεγραμμένος, | οὐδ’ ἐδ’ πραπίδων οὔακα νέμων, Ag. 801–2). ἀπομούσως (‘inartistically’) is not exactly the term one would expect: it may have been chosen here to further inflect the meaning of γεγραμμένος towards a painting; but it is very difficult to choose here between the two meanings (the uncertainty may actually only be ours: this is one of those passages that show how identical writing and painting are).²¹ The following two verses, if they can be taken to refer to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, may strengthen the impression of an allusion back to the ‘speaking painting’ (but they might also refer

¹⁹ For the oracular colouring cf. Jenkins 2006: 87. To consider the Titan’s *rhesis* an epistle, as Jenkins does, is going too far: Io and Prometheus are in a face-to-face situation.

²⁰ For the connection between the γραφή as painting here and the silently speaking γράμματα so often mentioned in connection with tablets, see Segal 1985: 223–5, with the further important point that the *graphe* here occurs when violence is done to speech. So also Stieber 2011: 148: the comparison with a painting emphasizes the silence, rather than the beauty, of Iphigenia.

²¹ Hall 2006: 134–5 discusses interpretations of γεγραμμένος as ‘written’ (‘inscribed upon the memory’), or as a metadramatic reference to the judges’ writing down their decision on the competition; she chooses the ‘painting’ interpretation, but her reason—that an interlinear gloss explains the text with ἐζωγραφημένος, showing that the ancients understood the verb as referring to a painting—is not compelling. It is the intertextual relationship which exists between all these references to images in the *Agamemnon* that orients the interpretation.

to Helen's forwardness).²² At any rate a painting (γραφή), quickly wiped out, again figures in Cassandra's final words, pronounced before entering the palace where she will be killed: sad is human fortune, for a shadow may arise even when the situation is prosperous, while in misfortune, 'One wet sponge-sweep wipes all our trace away' (Ag. 1329, Morshead's translation of βολαῖς ὑγρώσσαν σπόγγος ὤλεσεν γραφήν). The three passages are closely interconnected: these humans are but traces, images fixed in their description; by the end of the play, they will have been wiped away.

The thread continues through the two other plays of the trilogy. In the famous recognition scene of *Choephoroi*, Electra twice uses words compounded from γράφω to state that the outlines (περιγραφά, 207) of the feet and the imprints (ὑπογραφαί, 209) of the tendons, left by visitors on the tomb, are similar to her own; Orestes confirms her in her intuition by showing her a tissue she herself had woven, and pointing out to her the strokes of the wooden blade and the design of wild animals (θήρειον γραφήν, 232). In the recognition of the siblings, forms of literal writing thus play an important role. The other two instances of 'writing' in *Choephoroi* concern metaphorical writing. At v. 450, Electra enjoins Orestes to write her sufferings in his heart (τοιαῦτ' ἀκούων ἐν φρεσὶν γράφου; although the text is corrupt, this part is certain; the request was probably reiterated, again with the imperative γράφου, by the chorus). Later in the play, when given news of Orestes' supposed death, Clytaemestra laments the disappearance of the last hope for the house of Atreus, and orders that this betrayal be inscribed (προδοῦσαν ἔγγραφε, 699, a metaphorical inscription, as in a list of traitors—an odd expression, that would have been arresting for the public).

These two types of writing (the image and the metaphorical inscription) reappear in the last play of the trilogy, placed this time squarely on the side of death, horror, and punishment. The first one, the painting, is used at the opening of the *Eumenides* by the Pythia: in her tentative attempt to describe the scene she has just seen in the temple, the priestess turns first to comparison with mute, petrifying statues (Γόργελοι τύποι, v. 49), and then to a painting (εἶδόν ποτ' ἦδη . . . γεγραμμένας, 'I saw once depicted', 50). The priestess may here be alluding to a notional painting, such as those decorating Attic vases; perhaps to some famous painting; or, as has recently been suggested, to the masks of Harpies that the chorus had worn in Aeschylus' play *Phineus* fourteen years earlier, in 472 BC.²³ In turn, the Erinyes refer to metaphorical writing to stress the impossibility for men of avoiding punishment: for Hades 'supervises all things with his recording mind' (δελτογράφῳ δὲ πάντ' ἐπωπᾷ φρενί, 275). From this point onwards words linked to the root γραφ- disappear: Orestes is now in Athens, the images of writing cease, and the play proceeds towards a public trial and the resolution.

²² The transmitted text is θάρσος ἐκούσιον (willing boldness of Helen). The connection between Ag. 801–2 and Ag. 242–3 is tighter if Ahrens's suggestion θράσος ἐκ θυσιῶν (with reference to the sacrifice of Iphigenia) at Ag. 803 is accepted, as e.g. by Denniston and Page 1957: 139–40. Palaeographically the change is minimal; for some arguments against it see West 1990: 202–3. The reference to images of Helen in Ag. 416–17 is not pertinent here: the language and the overall meaning are somewhat different.

²³ Hall 2006: 116–18, who goes on to stress that 'allusions to works of visual art may well "mask" a specific inter-performative reference'.

In the *Oresteia*, then, words from the field of writing function as a way of interlinking images and themes one with the other. References to a metaphorical writing serve to convey the image of an enduring memory, typically of griefs; what is emphasized is the notion of permanency, rather than secrecy. This use is not negatively marked, although one may wonder whether inflexibility and inability to forget are necessarily to be viewed as positive values.²⁴ The painting image has different, rather ominous connotations; it shares with metaphorical writing an accent on rigidity (the person is fixed in an image, the accent is on the power of the image to last beyond its human counterpart); but as soon as the writing is thought of as not metaphorical but real, it becomes possible to wipe it out altogether.²⁵

Painted images also play a significant role in a fragment of Aeschylus' satyr play *Theoroi*, or *Isthmistiastai*. At the beginning of fr. 78a Radt, the satyrs appear proudly carrying images extraordinarily resemblant of themselves (probably satyr masks, in a reduplication of their own masks closely resembling a *mise en abyme*); these are images closer to life than Daedalus' models, as they proudly say—only lacking in voice (ἐἶδωλον εἶναι τρυῦτ' ἐμῇ μορφῇ πλέον | τὸ Δαιδάλου μ[ί]μημα· φωνῆς δέϊ μόνον, 6–7).²⁶ Their stated purpose is to adorn the temple of Poseidon with these votives, defined as κόσμον . . . καλλίγραπτον, beautifully painted ornament (11–12), a term that while again stressing the aesthetic aspect of the images, points to their artificial, crafted nature. (May the reference to the lack of voice be taken to imply that voice is located on the side of the natural?) The aspect most stressed is the life-like quality of these images: they are so close to reality that the chorus of satyrs next imagines the horror and confusion of their mother if she were to see them.²⁷ The imagined horrified response of the mother might reflect a mistaken assumption on her part that her children have been decapitated; but it may also be linked to the fact that images elicit particularly strong responses, sometimes

²⁴ For Segal 1986: 81, the association of writing and emotional interiority found in the image of the tablets of the mind is aided by 'the tendency in an oral culture to connect writing with private, secret or deceitful communication (particularly of an erotic nature) and the importance that writing gives to vision, for the Greek the most powerful stimulus of eros'. This is an important perspective, but needs qualifications, since the part about eros is true only in some instances, and the same applies to deceitfulness or secrecy.

²⁵ Agamemnon might seem to have changed, in the appreciation of the chorus (Aesch. Ag. 799–809); but his words show that he does not understand (note the emphasis on Helen in his words, γυναικὸς οὐνεκα, 823, just after the chorus has sung of how destructive Helen has been); and although he himself takes up the image of mirrors and doubles (ὁμιλίας κάτοπτρον, εἶδωλον σκιᾶς, 839), he misunderstands the chorus's warnings and continues to steer his course unwisely—e.g. stepping on the purple carpets in the next scene. When discussing *graphein* as painted image, other imagery-related terms should be taken into account; but this would exceed the boundaries of this study. Segal 1986 offers a good entry; see also Zeitlin 1994; Stieber 2011 (mainly focused on Euripides).

²⁶ Discussion of the play in Wessels and Krumeich 1999; O'Sullivan 2000; Voelke 2001: 283–9. Wessels and Krumeich 1999, 142–4 propose that the images carried by the satyrs might be wooden or ceramic *pinakes* with portraits, rather than masks; but the argument (that for a mask the painting would not be stressed, 143 n. 54) is not really convincing; O'Sullivan 2000 and Voelke 2001: 286–7 present persuasive arguments for masks.

²⁷ Zeitlin 1994: 138–9; Steiner 2001: 45–9, who stresses that the accent on the images' extraordinary *technē*, together with the mention of Daedalus (Daedalus' sculptures were supposed to be living, moving, and speaking ones), is meant to underline not so much their naturalistic quality as the fact that they, at least in the perception of the satyrs, 'straddle the boundaries between the manufactured and the living'; O'Sullivan 2000.

actually stronger than the ‘reality’ they are depicting.²⁸ Next, we see the satyrs nailing the images to the temple, exactly as votive dedications and bronze tablets with public decisions and decrees were nailed on (or directly inscribed upon) the walls of Greek temples:

κάπιπασσάλευ’ ἕκαστος τῆς κ[α]λῆς μορφῆς. [- | ἄγγελον, κήρυκ’ [ᾗ] γαυδον, ἐμπόρων
κωλύτορ[α, | ᾗ[s] γ’ ἐπισχῆσει κελεύθου τοῦς ξένο[υς] φο[ρ]β -
(Aesch. *Isthm.* fr. 78a, 19–21).

Each of you nail up there a messenger [...] of his handsome self, a voiceless herald, a restrainer of travellers, which will make visitors halt in their path [by the] fear[some look in their eye].²⁹

How exactly the paintings were supposed to function in the play is unclear; but the image of a voiceless herald is strikingly appropriate for a public display of writing (or as here, of painted, speaking although voiceless, images—even more so if they are indeed masks).³⁰ The effects and power of visual artifices are here presented through the mirror of (and enhanced by) the satyrs’ curiosity and inexperience.

Literal writing has an important place in the shield scene of the *Seven* (375–767); among the various codes through which, in the report of the herald, the message of the aggressors is expressed (gestural, sonorous, verbal, iconic, and graphic, variously combined), writing appears three times, to mark the messages of Capaneus, Eteoclus, and Polynices.³¹ The γράμματα are thus only one of the expressive codes mobilized, a specifically human one (writing has no part on those shields whose imagery is cosmic or monstrous, and it accompanies gods only when these interfere in the affairs of mortals, as is the case of Dike).³² The letters function in the same way as the images, transposing the living aggressivity of the warriors (gestural, vocal, and sonorous) into a permanent graphic sign; but they also serve an epigraphic function, in making clear the intentions of the figures depicted on the shields (in their turn coinciding with the intentions of the bearers of the shields). While it is important to keep in mind the overall scene, and while the various communicative codes bring out their full meaning only in their interaction, an analysis of the entire scene would go beyond what is required here. We shall thus concentrate only on how the *grammata* function in the three cases in which the shield bears an inscription.

²⁸ For the various interpretive possibilities, see O’Sullivan 2000: 361–3. The interpretation suggested above takes its cue from Zeitlin 1994 on ‘hyperviewing’ and the power of images (the mother here would be cast in the role of the ‘spectator’); see below on Hecuba in the *Hecuba*.

²⁹ The Loeb text of Sommerstein 2008 (fr. 78c = 78a + 78c); his translation, modified.

³⁰ The overlap of visual and aural here is noted by O’Sullivan 2000: 363–4, who compares with Aesch. *Sept.* 518 (πρὸς λόγον τοῦ σήματος, ‘in accordance with the symbol’, referring to the image on the shield of Hyperbios); in both Aesch. *Sept.* 82 and *Suppl.* 180, the dust raised by the enemy is described as ἀναυδὸς ἄγγελος, ‘voiceless messenger’. An intriguing comparison is offered by a small inscribed bronze disk from Olympia dated 500–475 BC (Minon 2007, no. 16, *SEG* 51, 532), with holes, presumably to put the disk up against a wall: the Eleans give the citizenship to two individuals and their descendants, who among other things will also receive the *theoroi* (sacred ambassadors); the text closes with ‘the tablet is a dedication to Zeus’, ὃ δὲ πῖναξ ἄγαλμα τῷ Διός.

³¹ The bibliography is immense; the fundamental essay is Zeitlin 1982; see also the shorter, excellent discussion of the interaction between the various communicative codes in Magini 1998: 25–35.

³² Magini 1998: 28.

In the case of Capaneus, the messenger reports his words ('he says that he will sack the city (ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν | . . . φησίν), whether the god is willing or not . . . he compares Zeus' lightning and thunderbolts to the heat of midday', 427–31), describes the device on the shield (a naked man carrying a torch), and adds that 'in golden letters he declares: "I will burn the city"' (χρυσοῖς δὲ φωνεῖ γράμμασιν 'πρήσω πόλιν', 434). From the way in which this is presented, it is unclear—purposely so—whether it is the image, or Capaneus himself, who speaks through golden letters: the various codes are here superposed; at the same time, the relations established between them emphasize their differences.³³ The next warrior to use letters to enhance the message of his shield is Eteoclus. Eteoclus is silent, but circles with his horses, who emit hissing, barbarian sounds; the image on his shield, unlike that of Capaneus, is a true mirror of himself, an armed hoplite climbing on a ladder over the top of the wall of a city which he wants to sack (ἐκπέρσαι θέλων); 'he too shouts in syllables of written letters that not even Ares could throw him off the battlements' (βοᾷ δὲ χοῦτος γραμμάτων ἐν ξυλλαβαῖς | ὥς οὐδ' ἂν Ἄρης σφ' ἐκβάλοι πυργωμάτων, 468–9). Here, the letters do not replicate an oral message, as in Capaneus' case; the image on the shield—and thus Eteoclus himself—speaks through the letters only.³⁴ As for the seventh warrior, Polynices, he makes use of all the communicative codes mentioned, body language, sound, words, icon, and writing. The messenger first reports Polynices' words (that he may climb the walls, be proclaimed king, and sing the victory paeon, and either kill or send Eteocles into exile, *Sept.* 634–8). He then describes his shield, on which a double device (διπλοῦν σῆμα) of a woman leading a warrior is cunningly engraved (προσμεμηχανημένον); the woman affirms she is Justice, 'Dike, as the letters say: "I will bring back this man from exile, and he shall possess his father's city and the right to dwell in his home"' (Δίκη δ' ἄρ' εἶναι φησιν, ὥς τὰ γράμματα | λέγειν 'κατάξω δ' ἄνδρα τόνδε, καὶ πόλιν | ἔξει πατρώαν δωμάτων τ' ἐπιστροφάς', 646–8).³⁵ Here, the identification between the second image (the warrior) and Polynices is total; just as total seems to be the identification between the image of the modest woman and Dike, the goddess daughter of Zeus, the one goddess who does make a limited use of writing, because she has to deal with mortals. And yet, the repetition of verbs of saying insinuates doubt, as does the fact that this is the first time that the letters, rather than the image/referent, speak; it is as if the message (its vocalization) was detached from the image (in fact, unless we assume that there is another identifying inscription stating that this is Dike, what the woman says in the report of the messenger and what the letters say are two

³³ Capaneus is the subject of the first verb of saying, at l. 428, and his words are reported in indirect speech by the messenger; he is the subject of ἔχει at 432 (ἔχει δὲ σῆμα γυνὸν ἄνδρα πυρφόρον); but both Capaneus and the naked man may be the subjects of vv. 433–4: φλέγει δὲ λαμπὰς διὰ χειρὼν ὥπλισμένη, | χρυσοῖς δὲ φωνεῖ γράμμασιν 'πρήσω πόλιν.' The parallelism of thunderbolts and torch, φησίν and φωνεῖ γράμμασιν, enhances the contrast between Capaneus, a hoplite, and the naked man depicted on the shield. See Zeitlin 1982: 63–5; on letters as 'double' of the oral message see Magini 1998: 23–4, and on this passage, 29.

³⁴ Magini 1998: 30. For the cultural progression, see Zeitlin 1982: 74–5; for the name Eteoclus, itself a message, Zeitlin 1982: 77–8 (Eteoclus is a morphological variant of Eteocles; the anti-Theban hero Eteoclus replaces here the epic Adrastus, so as to create a thematic variant of the Theban Eteocles).

³⁵ On this last gate, see Zeitlin 1982: 135–45 (in part. 138, on διπλοῦν, and on the fusion of man, iconic sign, and verbal sign; and 139 on the relation between Eteocles and Polynices).

different things). Eventually, the words of Dike are shown to be a projection of Polynices: Eteocles reads them as babbling letters ('we shall soon know whether these letters worked in gold on the shield, bubbling with his mind's wanderings, will bring him home', *εἴ νιν κατὰξει χρυσότευκτα γράμματα | ἐπ' ἀσπίδος φλύοντα σὺν φοίτῳ φρενῶν*, 660–1).

What are then the connotations of writing here? In the first case, that of Capaneus, writing doubles the oral message; in the case of Eteocles, it substitutes for it; in Polynices' case, it adds a further aspect. Throughout, the connotations of the messages transmitted are negative—but the negativity would seem to touch the message rather than the means. Writing is here used exactly as the voice is used; the various communicative codes interact with an extraordinary degree of sophistication. The entire scene can be taken as the result of a reflection on the use of all available communicative codes, in synaesthetic combination and separated, to produce the most vivid description possible.

Supplices presents four explicit references to writing, the highest number in any Aeschylean play. This number impresses, especially considering that other passages may imply writing too; one of the explicit references to writing, it has been claimed, concerns letters. A closer look shows that two of the four mentions of writing concern metaphorical writing: early in the play, the Danaids are asked by their father to preserve his words as if putting them on tablets (179: *αἰνῶ φυλάξαι τᾶμ' ἔπη δελτουμένας*); later, once the decision of the Argives has been announced, Danaus tells his daughters to add his present counsels to those they have already written down, in a sentence that clearly harks back to his first request (*καὶ ταῦθ' ἄμ' ἐγγράψασθε πρὸς γεγραμμένοις | πολλοῖσιν ἄλλοις σωφρονίσμασιν πατρός*, 991–2). At 708–9, in praying that the Argives may always worship the gods who possess their land, the chorus (i.e. the Danaids) mentions a divine, and probably again only metaphorical, writing: respect of the parent is inscribed in Dike's *thesmia*.³⁶ These references all concern the Danaids' relationship to writing: they have an idea of what this skill is, but they practise it only metaphorically.

The remaining mention of writing is very different: it is the statement made by the king of Argos, Pelasgus, that a vote passed by the people of the city is stronger than a tablet:

τοιάδε δημόπρακτος ἐκ πόλεως μία | ψήφος κέκρανται, μήποτ' ἐκδοῦναι βίᾳ | στόλον γυναικῶν. τῶνδ' ἐφήλωται τορῶς | γόμφος διαμπάς, ὡς μένειν ἀραρότως. | ταῦτ' οὐ πῖναξιν ἐστὶν ἐγγεγραμμένα | οὐδ' ἐν πτυχαῖς βύβλων κατεσφραγισμένα, | σαφῇ δ' ἀκούεις ἐξ ἐλευθεροστόμου | γλώσσης. (Suppl. 942–9)

That is the unanimous vote passed by the people of the city, never to surrender under compulsion this band of women. This decision has been nailed down with a nail that has pierced right through, so that it stays fixed. Not on tablets are these decisions inscribed, nor in folded papyrus sheets have they been sealed: you hear them plainly from free-speaking lips.

This statement Pelasgus makes in answer to the request of the Egyptian herald to know the name of the person who stops him from bringing back the fifty women. Pelasgus refuses to give his name; he actually begins his answer with this

³⁶ On the meaning (literal or metaphorical) of *γέγραπται* here see Friis-Johansen and Whittle 1980: iii, 69–70. Note also the writing by Dike in the *Dike* fragment, fr. 281a Radt, discussed below, 197–8.

refusal (τί σοι λέγειν χρῆ τοῦνομ'; 938), which underlines the fact that the decision is not a personal one, and then goes on to relate the decision of the people.³⁷ The final sentence of Pelasgus' answer, where his own free words are opposed to tablets or sealed papyrus, implies that for the Argive king the oral promise has a stronger value than anything written on tablets, or sealed in the folds of papyrus sheets;³⁸ yet, since at issue here is the stability and permanency of the Argives' decision, as shown by the image of the nail in the wall, writing would *prima facie* seem to fit the bill better. Faced with this difficulty, interpreters have argued that an inscribed decree might have been modified, or might have been unclear; that an oral messenger is generally felt to be more reliable; or that this passage should be understood in light of the (later) Platonic critique of writing, as expressed in the *Phaedrus*.³⁹ As Grethlein has convincingly shown, the first two solutions are desperate remedies, and the third approach does not work here: what the passage highlights is the immutability of the spoken word as opposed to written statements, something very different from what Plato had in mind. Moreover, the metaphor of writing for secure remembrance is very present in Greek tragedy, and particularly in this play: we thus need to explain the apparent sudden shift in the perception of writing.

One solution to all these problems is to see in this passage a contrast between oral communication, marked as free and democratic, and written communication, marked as despotic. 'The oral message is more befitting than a letter for the representative of free citizens, presumably because there is no suggestion of secrecy about it'; the democratic, open way of conducting affairs is here opposed to the oriental, despotic way, a thesis that finds support in what precedes and follows this passage.⁴⁰ More specifically, oral communication as the most democratic form would be opposed here to the Greek letter (πίναξ) and to the Egyptian writing (βύβλος). But πίναξ may be used for other types of writing besides letters (including decrees); and βύβλος, a (here sealed) papyrus sheet or roll, cannot be interpreted in fifth-century Athens as typical of Egyptian writing.⁴¹ An alternative solution, the one proposed recently by Grethlein, lies in understanding these two forms of written documents not as opposed to the oral communication, but rather

³⁷ For the use of a specific type of political language in this play, see Easterling 1985: 3–4.

³⁸ So e.g. Segal 1986: 88; Musti 1997: 49–53; a very different interpretation in Grethlein 2001. The interpretation of Pelasgus' words here is independent from the larger issue of his role in the play (Sommerstein 1997 makes of him a manipulator of the assembly—words could be used to bad purposes too).

³⁹ See Grethlein 2001: 176–8 for references and a good discussion; I fully agree with Grethlein's point, that a critique of writing in the Platonic sense cannot be what is meant here.

⁴⁰ Friis-Johansen and Whittle 1980: iii, 250–2; cf. Easterling 1985: 5. While ultimately unconvinced by this interpretation, Grethlein himself (2001: 178–9) brings forward arguments for it.

⁴¹ For the interpretation that sees in πίναξ a Greek format (and specifically a letter) and in *byblos* the oriental format, see e.g. Friis-Johansen and Whittle 1980: iii, 250–2; cf. Easterling 1985: 5. Turner 1975: 10 interprets everything as directly related to the workings of Athenian democracy: the nail would be the one with which decrees are publicly nailed; the πίναξ would correspond to the minutes of the secretary; the folded and sealed βύβλος would be the sheet of papyrus kept in the archive (he compares the 'document of the decree', mentioned in Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 2, ll. 61–2 (τὸ δὲ βιβλίον | τοῦ ψηφίσματος παραδόναι αὐτῷ γραμματέα τῆς βουλῆς, 403 BC). *Contra*, Grethlein (2001: 178–9).

as (positive) instances of permanency, mentioned in order to further stress the permanency of Pelasgus' words.⁴²

But attractive as such an interpretation may be, it does not really account for the flow of the passage. It seems difficult to deny that there is here a contrast between *πίνακες* and *βύβλοι* on the one hand, and the free voice of the representative of the Argives, a contrast that implies an opposition between a despotic and a democratic way of conducting affairs. The way out of the interpretive difficulty may be to look at the play first, rather than at the Athenian context, in order to understand what is meant by *πίνακες* and *βύβλοι* here. For both terms appear earlier in the play. At vv. 438 ff., after the pressing supplications of the Danaids, when Pelasgus realizes the inevitability of what will happen, he expresses his realization through the image of a rivet or a nail fixing solidly a ship (*πᾶς' ἔστ' ἀνάγκη, καὶ γεγόμενται . . .*, 440: compare *γόμφος* at 945).⁴³ The Danaids seize the occasion to make their strongest and final appeal (*τέρματ'*, 455): they first show him their belts (or breast-bands, *στροφούς*) and girdles, which they qualify as 'gatherers of their robes' (it is worth noting that the Greek here has 'syllables', *συλλαβὰς πέπλων*, 457); Pelasgus answers with mild irony, noting that these are appropriate items for a woman (*γυναικῶν ταῦτα συμπρεπὴ πέπλοι*, 458). The girls then proceed to inform the king that if their appeal is not heard, with the help of these they will 'adorn these images with tablets of a strange sort' (*νέοις πίναξι βρέτεια κοσμήσαι τᾶδε*, 463). When Pelasgus does not understand, they explain that they plan to hang themselves from the statues of the gods: they will themselves be *πίνακες*, messages of a new type, with the help of their 'syllables'.⁴⁴ Significantly, the entire conversation between Pelasgus and the Danaids (from v. 234, his entrance on the stage) is meant to foreground their diversity: the king remarks throughout on the girls' alterity, while they do not understand Pelasgus' desire to defer the decision to the people, nor do they comprehend the workings of the Argive system.

I suggest then that if Pelasgus stresses in his answer to the herald that his words are firm and not written on *πίνακες*, he is going back in his mind to the first time he has used the image of a nail, but at the same time he is keeping his distance from the novel kind of writing represented by the Danaids. As for the sealed *βύβλος*, while it is true that in a fifth-century Athenian context it cannot be taken to mean Egyptian writing, yet in the context of this specific play it may very well have had this specific meaning. Only a few verses earlier Danaus, talking to his daughters, had opposed Argives and Egyptians in affirming: 'Yet rumour has it that wolves are stronger than dogs; the papyrus-fruit does not conquer ears of corn' (*ἀλλ' ἔστι φήμη τοὺς λύκους κρείσσους κυνῶν | εἶναι: βύβλου δὲ καρπὸς οὐ*

⁴² Grethlein 2001: 181, who proposes the following translation: 'Die ist <zw> nicht auf Holztafeln geschrieben und auch nicht in Papyrusrollen "eingesiegelt", aber—<was viel mehr ist>—deutlich hörst du es von einer freisprechenden Zunge.'

⁴³ The passage is problematic (see Friis-Johansen and Whittle 1980: ii, 345–7), but the 'nailing' image is certain, and appropriate.

⁴⁴ *Suppl.* 464–5. Friis-Johansen and Whittle 1980: ii, 110 remark: 'The tablets will, as it were, contain a very unusual inscription, to the effect that because of Pelasgus' attitude the gods have *not* been able to help their suppliants.' Cf. also vv. 282–3, where even if the Danaids are being compared with real Cypriot women, the overall imagery is that of artistic representation (as seen by Kranz 1933: 74), here specifically sculpture. Mitchell 2006 offers a fascinating discussion of the way in which the Danaids are both kin (Greek) and foreigners.

κρατεῖ στάχυν, 760–1). Wolves and corn here represent the Argives, while the dogs and the papyrus stand for the Egyptians.⁴⁵ In that same passage, Danaus had been careful to locate himself on the side of orality: in concluding his dialogue with his daughters, he had stated that ‘The city will find no fault with a messenger old in years, but young in his well-speaking mind’ (ἄγγελον δ’ οὐ μέμβεται | πόλις γέρονθ’, ἡβώντα δ’ εὐγλώσσῳ φρενί, 774–5). Thus, when Pelasgus affirms that his answer is not written on a sealed papyrus sheet, he is keeping his distance from the male counterpart of the Danaids, from another type of writing: personal, private, sealed. As a result, I should not look for any specific reference to letters in the πίνακες or the sealed βύβλος of *Suppl.* 946–7. Of course, the σήματα λύγρα (‘baneful signs’) inscribed on Bellerophon’s folded πίναξ (Hom. *Il.* 6. 169) will have come to the mind of some spectators; the reference may have been mobilized already in the earlier passage where πίνακες and death are linked—after all, Bellerophon’s letter, even though written by a man, was instigated by a woman, and was meant to cause death; but foremost here, in Pelasgus’ words, is a contrast between the free mouth of the representative of the Greek demos, the silent and deadly feminine writing proposed by the Danaids, and the sealed and just as deadly writing of the violent Egyptians. Even as the king defends the Danaids, he lumps them together with their cousins, in a gesture that may have pointed to the events narrated in the rest of the trilogy. Such an interpretation makes of *Supplikes* a play with no references to ‘real’, or at any rate Greek, writing: writing is here either metaphorical, and on the whole positive, or external to the Greek world, and negative, because located on the side of the feminine, the personal, the oriental, the secret.⁴⁶

And yet interestingly Dike is mentioned more than once in connection with very literal writing. As we have seen, the chorus of the *Suppliants* states that respect for one’s parents is written in Dike’s *thesmia* (Aesch. *Suppl.* 708–9); this may be literal, or metaphorical writing. Dike appears also in the shield scene of the *Seven against Thebes*, as one of the emblems which speak through writing; of course, this is a problematic Justice, as the events will show, and the διπλοῦν, ‘double’, that characterizes the σῆμα there implies certainly more than the simple fact that two figures form it. Finally, a fragment of an unknown play of Aeschylus (F 281a Radt, possibly from the *Aetnaean Women*) describes how Dike accomplishes her divine role of rewarding the just and chastening the reckless through writing the mortals’ offences on the tablet of Zeus: at the right moment, the list of crimes will be unrolled (πίνακ’ ἀναπτύσσει[s], v. 22). In the dialogue between the chorus and Dike, writing on a tablet (and this seems indeed a very literal writing) is presented as stronger than either magic or force (Cho. ἐ]πωδαῖς ἢ κατ’ ἰσχύος τρόπῳ[v]; Di. γράφουσα] τὰ<μ>παρακρήματ’ ἐν δέλτῳ Διό[s., vv. 20–21). This is the

⁴⁵ A legend associated Danaus with the wolf (Paus. 2. 19. 3–5) and with Apollo Λύκειος, invoked by the chorus of Danaids at v. 686; the wolf appears on fifth century Argive coins, and is perceived a symbolic of the city (schol. Soph. *El.* 6: τῷ νομίσματι τῶν Ἀργείων ἐγχαράττεσθαι <τὸν> λύκον ὡς καὶ τὰς γλαυκὰς Ἀθήνας). Cf. further Friis-Johansen and Whittle 1980: iii, 49–50 and 108–10; Sommerstein 2008, *ad loc.*

⁴⁶ Aeschylus would certainly not have let himself be constrained by mythical chronologies; yet if we think that Danaus was credited with bringing writing to Greece, it makes sense that only the Danaids and the Egyptians are credited with (deviant) forms of writing, while the Greeks speak.

first appearance in Greek literature of divine tablets of destinies, a notion well-known in the Near East, where it plays an important role.⁴⁷ But the image, whatever its origins, is employed in fifth-century Attic drama in a very specific way: it mediates between the human and the divine world, in a context that concerns the administration of divine justice.⁴⁸ Why the notion of administering (divine) justice should have attracted writing so forcefully is disputed: besides the possibility of an Oriental influence, whose channels are not so easy to trace, the actual writing of the laws as a display at the centre of the polis appears an interesting possibility. At any rate, the idea of a heavenly register, kept by Dike, Zeus, or also the stars, will have some future in Greek literature: but it will never become central.⁴⁹ What is indubitable is that whenever the gods write (and this happens a few times in drama), it is because of men.

A typology of the forms of writing (and of written documents) present in Aeschylean drama thus includes writing as a metaphor for firm recollection, often implying lists (so Dike's *thesmia* in the *Suppliants*, so also Hades' 'delto-graphic mind' surveying men's actions in *Eumenides*, or the 'memory-tablets' of Io's mind registering her future wanderings, in *Prometheus Bound*); 'writing' as a painted image, rigid and fixed, yet surprisingly labile, and often feminine; writing on shields, that is, writing on a private and personal support, but for public display; and writing of non-identified documents on normal, everyday supports, such as *pinakes* and papyrus, but a writing attributed to 'others'. In all this, there is evident a reflection on writing and on the possibilities it involves. The lists are

⁴⁷ For instance in the *Gilgamesh*, Belet-seri, the scribe of the netherworld, reads from tablets to Queen Ereshkigal (*Gilgamesh* VII 194–5); the prophet Malachi mentions a book of remembrance, written in front of the Lord, of those who revered him (Malachi 3:16); further references in West 1997: 562 n. 36. In the Near East tablets held by gods extend beyond the sphere of retribution, to include planning and organization of the world in general: so, for instance, Nisaba consults a tablet when organizing the building of the temple of Gudea (*ETCSL* 2.1.7): writing underwrites human and divine society.

⁴⁸ On the 'Tablets of Zeus', see Solmsen 1944; on the Dike fragment, Wessels 1999, who gives a competent *status quaestionis*, and considers that the fragment comes from a satyr play. Patrito 2001: 83 suggests some external parallels to Dike's action of writing on a tablet: the Athenian organization of the *Dionysia*, in which the judges would write their decision on a *γραμματεῖον* (compare the vase with Hermes and a tablet discussed above); the political project of Hippodamus of Miletus (Arist. *Pol.* 2. 5. 8); even more interesting, if this fragment was indeed part of Aeschylus' *Women of Aetna*, the tradition according to which in Sicily oaths were inscribed on a tablet, then immersed in the water, to test the truthfulness of the taker of the oath ([Arist.] *Mir. ausc.* 57, 834b; Polem. fr. 83 Müller; Steph. Byz., s.v. *Palike*). Quite a few texts connect writing, water, and women: besides Aesch. Ag. 1329 (discussed above) and Soph. fr. 811 Radt (below), note also the comic references to oaths written in water or wine, below, n. 57.

⁴⁹ Patrito 2001: 82 n. 17 and Magini 1997/98: 242 n. 84 list references. For the future of the idea, cf. Plaut. *Rudens* 13–15 (the stars report in writing to Zeus the names of those who swear false testimony or false oath) and 21 (Zeus keeps written on other tablets the names of the good men, *bonos in aliis tabulis exscriptos habet*, an idea derived from Diphilus), with Solmsen 1944; also pertinent, even if tablets are not explicitly mentioned, is Callimachus *Hymn 6 to Demeter*, 56 (Nemesis 'put down in writing his evil speech', *κακὰν ἐγράψατο φωνάν*), a passage taken up by Nonnus *Dion.* 1. 481; see also Babrius 127 (= Perry 1952, no. 313: Zeus orders that Hermes write on *ostraka* men's wicked deeds); Babrius 75 (= Perry 1952, no. 317: Kore and Pluto threaten to write down the names of those doctors who do not let people die); Luc. *De merc. cond.* 12 *ἐκ τῶν Διὸς δέλτων ὁ μάρτυς* (in an ironical context); schol. B Hom. *Il.* 1. 175; and Hesych. σ 1190 *σκυτάλαι· βακτηρίαι. καὶ αἱ ἱππικαὶ ἴλαι. καὶ ὄφ[ρ]ων εἶδος. φραγέλλια, λῶροι. πίνακες, ἐφ' οἷς ἡ Δίκη γράφει τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀμαρτήματα. ἡ θύλακες δερμάτινοι*. Behind Hesychius is most likely the Dike fragment (Aesch. fr. 281a Radt).

particularly interesting, as these are also, as we have seen, one of the formats chosen for *defixiones*; clearly, here the influence of official lists is felt. The absence of writing from *Persians*, in a play that contains much that is catalogic, might also be significant: if there is a play in which oriental, tyrannical writing could have been signposted, that is *Persians* (one has only to compare with the picture offered in Herodotus' *Histories*). *Persians*, produced in 472 BC, is our earliest preserved play: explicit allusions to writing may have been purposely avoided, or better, may have been felt not to be pertinent. The messenger's report in *Persians* is particularly close to the voice of the epic narrator;⁵⁰ avoiding writing makes the narrative of the defeat even more something sanctioned by the gods, rather than a 'text', with all of the human connotations this implies.

None of the plays refers explicitly, much less brings onto the stage, any concrete 'Greek' document; this applies also to letters. *Ἐπιστολαί* (in the plural), that is what will become the specific term for letters, appears four times in Aeschylus, in contexts where the meaning is clearly that of 'counsels, injunctions' given in a face-to-face encounter by one person to another person or to a group, with no implication of writing.⁵¹ It would be interesting to know more about the context of the 'old writing' mentioned in fr. 331 *inc. fab.* Radt (ὡς λέγει γέρον γράμμα); as it is, we can only see in this fragment one more proof of the interest borne by Aeschylus to writing. Finally, while there is much that is unclear about fr. 358 *inc. fab.* Radt, 'Face (?) him at a distance, because at close range you won't [hit?] him; be like a man who reads clearly in his old age' (†οὐδὲ† ἄπω[θεν] αὐτόν· οὐ γὰρ ἐγγύθεν | [x -]: γέρων δὲ γραμματεὺς γενοῦ σαφής),⁵² the allusion to changes in vision depending on age, put forward here (in an extraordinarily anachronistic way!) in connection with the office of *grammateus*, betrays a remarkable familiarity, on the part of the dramatist but also of the public, with writing. If the context was indeed a combat, then the Homeric use of *ἐπιγράφω* to mean 'to graze, to inflict a light wound', typically with an arrow from afar, may have been the subtext of this allusion to writing.

5.1.2. Sophocles

In Sophocles, as in Aeschylus, *ἐπιστολαί* was probably used only for oral messages. Out of the four instances of the term, two are unproblematic: the contexts show that the *ἐπιστολαί* referred to in the *Ajax* (748) and in the *Oedipus at Colonus* (1601) are indeed oral requests. The lack of context of fr. 128 Radt, from

⁵⁰ Barrett 2002: 40–6.

⁵¹ Probably all (certainly three out of four) are instances of 'instructions' given by a father to his son or daughter: by an unknown character to another, in Aesch fr. 293 Radt (× — ἄκουε τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς, possibly words of Helios to Phaethon); by Darius to Xerxes, who does not remember them, in *Pers.* 783; by Zeus to Hephaistus, in *P.V.* 3–4; by Danaus to his daughters, in *Suppl.* 1012. In this last example, it might be just remotely possible to 'hear' writing behind the term: the exhortation to follow the paternal counsel (φύλαξαι τὰσδ' ἐπιστολάς πατρός) closes a speech that Danaus had opened with the suggestion that the girls write down his counsels (991–2, and cf. the use of φύλαξαι for Danaus' suggestions in 179). But the situation is that of a face-to-face encounter.

⁵² I prefer here to Radt's text the *cruces* and unrestored lacunae of Sommerstein 2008, whose translation I follow.

the *Andromeda*, ‘do not be afraid of new orders/letters’ (μηδὲν φοβείσθε προσφάτους ἐπιστολάς), renders discussion impossible.⁵³ The fourth, and most interesting, instance occurs in *Trachiniae*: Deianira, after having learnt the truth about Iole, suggests that they all enter the house so that Lichas ‘may take away the message of words’ (ὡς λόγων τ’ ἐπιστολάς φέρης, 493) as well as gifts in exchange of gifts. It could not be clearer that the ἐπιστολαί are here an oral message—and yet: why the precision, why ‘of words’? The *iunctura* sounds odd.⁵⁴ While a formal explanation for it can be found in the fact that λόγων τ’ ἐπιστολάς here parallels the δῶρων δῶρα of the following verse, Deianira’s words also find their sense in the overall context of the play which, as we shall see, gives a large place to written transmission of information. Finally, another tantalizing fragment must be mentioned in this context: fr. 784 *inc. fab.* Radt mentions a ‘writing of the herald’ (γράμμα κηρύκειον), whatever that may mean exactly. Once again, the lack of context renders any definite interpretation impossible; but whether a symbol or a long piece of writing (a message) was meant, the passage clearly had to do with the transmission of official information in a context in which some form of writing figured.⁵⁵

At any rate: letters *stricto sensu* do not seem to appear in what remains of Sophocles.⁵⁶ Writing, however, figures, and writing of a type rather different from what we have seen in Aeschylus. Granted, some instances of metaphorical writing are also present in Sophocles. Thus, at the end of the *Philoctetes* (produced in 409 BC), Neoptolemus, before making his final plea to Philoctetes, exhorts the hero to write his words in his mind (καὶ ταῦτ’ ἐπίστω, καὶ γράφου φρενῶν ἔσω, 1325); he will not succeed, and the authoritative words of Heracles will instead make their traditional, unwritten way into Philoctetes’ mind. Writing in the tablets of the mind as a metaphor for recollection also appears in fr. 597 Radt, from the *Triptolemos* (one of the earliest plays by Sophocles, to be dated in the 460s).

⁵³ Lloyd-Jones in the Loeb edition translates ‘letters’—but ‘orders’ would be equally possible. Segal 1986: 95 is probably thinking of this fragment when he mentions as instances of letters by women who can bring salvation ‘that of Andromeda in Euripides’ lost play of that name’ (but I cannot understand where the notion of salvation through letters fits in any of the known *Andromeda* plays).

⁵⁴ Davies 1991: 135 simply comments: ‘a defining genitive’, adding that λόγους φέρειν is tragic idiom for ‘bring a message’. Rosenmeyer 2001: 62 suggests as the reason the fact that Deianira will send as a present a robe in a casket, sealed with the stamp of her ring (614–15): ‘the robe sealed in its casket functions almost as a letter would: it attempts to bridge the distance between the separated lovers, defends its authenticity by way of a signet ring, and metaphorically transfers Deianira’s love with it to its recipient, Heracles.’ One could add that, just as some letters, it kills. See already Segal 1986 for an interpretation along these lines.

⁵⁵ The fragment is preserved in *Etym. Gen. A* (= *Et. Magnum* 511.53) = *Et. Gud.* 320.23 Sturz: ἔστι δὲ καὶ κηρύκειον ὅπερ κτηγικόν ἐστι καὶ σημαίνει τὸ τοῦ κήρυκος, ὡς παρὰ Σοφοκλεῖ γράμμα κηρύκειον. Radt mentions Wagner’s suggestion that the gloss κηρύκειος γραφή, transmitted without further interpretation in Suda κ 1547 Adler, may refer to this passage. It might have been a text, or an image announcing further developments.

⁵⁶ A letter may have played a role in the *Iobates*: but only three fragments of the play are preserved, and the plot is very sketchily known (it revolved around the story of Bellerophontes). A number of Italiote vases represent the arrival of Bellerophontes at Iobates’s court, holding the letter, or also Iobates reading the letter (see below, 223). Because of the centrality of Iobates to these paintings, it has been suggested that they refer not to Euripides’ *Stheneboea*, but to Sophocles’ *Iobates*. Somehow, Sophocles must have managed to get the information from Proetus to Iobates, and a letter is a reasonable guess—but it is simply impossible to say anything more with the material we have.

This happened most likely in the words of Demeter when advising Triptolemos (θου δ' ἐν φρενὸς δέλτοισι τοὺς ἐμοὺς λόγους). Again a metaphor, but a very different one, is used in fr. 811 *inc. fab.* Radt, 'The oaths of women I write in water' (ὄρκους ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς ὕδωρ γράφω). The lack of context renders interpretation difficult, but clearly in this passage the stability inherent in writing (and in oaths) is played off against the impermanency of water, to the disadvantage of women.⁵⁷ Another instance of a metaphorical reference to writing, pointing, however, to a very normal, everyday use of it, appears in the *Oedipus King*: Teiresias refuses Oedipus' accusation, and states that he will not accept being considered (but the Greek has 'to be inscribed') as a client of Creon (οὐ Κρέοντος προστάτου γεγράφομαι, 411).

Writing of a different kind is briefly alluded to in the *Antigone*. In a famous passage, the non-written and stable laws of the gods are pitted against the *kerygma* ordered by Creon:

It was not Zeus who made this proclamation (ὁ κηρύξας τάδε), nor was it Justice who lives with the gods below that established such laws among men (τοιούσδ' . . . ὤρισεν νόμους), nor did I think your proclamations (τὰ σὰ κηρύγματαθ') strong enough to have power to overrule, mortal as they were, the unwritten and unfailing ordinances of the gods (ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλή θεῶν | νόμῳ δύνασθαι θνητά γ' ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν). (Soph. *Ant.* 450–5, text and trans. Lloyd-Jones)

This passage illustrates perfectly Easterling's point about anachronisms: if non-written laws are here mentioned, then written laws must exist as well—but they are nowhere mentioned. References to *nomoi* in the play are frequent (there are eighteen instances, not including our passage, where Antigone refers to νόμιμα); and they will have brought to the minds of the public the familiar texts of the city decrees. (In this context it is worth noting that at v. 448 Antigone admits that the κηρυχθέντα were ἐμφανή, 'manifest', using a word from the register of vision.) Yet it is nevertheless the case that in our passage the non-written laws of the gods are not pitted against a written law, but against an oral proclamation by a mortal.⁵⁸ This is, however, not just a matter of avoiding anachronisms: written documents may be authoritative, but they become so only after a public proclamation; in a number of cases the written text itself states that the proclamation has to be repeated for the decision to be 'reactivated'. The number of references to terms with the root κηρυγ- in the play (twelve times) makes it clear that public proclamation is important (that public, authoritative proclamations may still be wrong is another matter). Thus writing is alluded to, as part of the debate; but the

⁵⁷ The sentence quickly became proverbial and found fortune among the comic poets, who further played on the image: cf. Philonides (a contemporary of Aristophanes), fr. 7 K.-A.: ὄρκους δὲ μοιχῶν εἰς τέφραν ἐγὼ γράφω, 'I write the oaths of the adulterers in ashes', with an allusion to the punishment (depilation with hot ashes) inflicted to those caught in the act, Ar. *Nub.* 1083; and Xenarchos (a fourth-century comic playwright), fr. 6 K.-A.: ὄρκον δ' ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς οἶνον γράφω, 'I write a woman's oath in wine'.

⁵⁸ Arist. *Rhet.* 1368b5–25 distinguishes between ἴδιος νόμος, partly written, partly unwritten, because it consists of customs, and κοινὸς νόμος, the universal, unwritten law of nature. For the latter, cf. Soph. *OT* 865 ff.; Thuc. 2. 37. νόμιμα, observances sanctioned by usage, is the more correct word: so Plat. *Leg.* 793A. I am not entering here on the legal issue of 'who is right'; on this, see Harris 2006: 41–80, esp. 53–7, for the relationship of written and unwritten laws, and 61–6 for the *Antigone*.

issue is one of levels of authority and of correct decision-making, and not of writtenness against unwrittenness.⁵⁹

Among the plays preserved in their entirety, the only one in which writing has an important role is *Trachiniae*: two written documents figure in the plot, one real (an ancient tablet written by Heracles for his own use), the other one metaphorical. Throughout the play, information about these two ‘documents’ is delivered in steps: piecemeal information concerning the first tablet spans the entire play, so that complete clarity and understanding comes only at the end; as for the second, its action is exerted mainly in the central part of the play—but here too, the details are learnt a posteriori.

In the prologue, the audience is alerted to the existence of a tablet (δέλτον), left by Heracles to Deianira; now that the hero has not been heard from since fifteen months, this tablet makes her fear for the worst (46–8).⁶⁰ Slightly later, when talking to her son Hyllus, Deianira affirms that on leaving, Heracles entrusted prophecies to her (μαντεία πιστά, 77), and gives some hints as to their content; that these prophecies and the tablet are one and the same thing becomes clear later, during the first episode, in the course of a dialogue between Deianira and the chorus. Deianira recounts that Heracles, who had never before left any instructions, this time left in the house an ancient tablet, inscribed with signs (τότ’ ἐν δόμοις | λείπει παλαιὸν δέλτον ἐγγεγραμμένην | ξυνθήμαθ’, 156–8), while also giving oral instructions. But instead of setting Deianira’s mind at peace, instructions and tablet (especially the latter) keep worrying her: for before, Heracles had always simply left, and the assumption had been that he would come back at some point; this time, he acted as if he was going to die, giving testamentary instructions, and leaving the tablet as a kind of substitute—a substitute that does not help Deianira at all.⁶¹

The oddity of the word ξυνθήματα, used to describe the writing on the tablet, has not escaped interpreters: a σύνθημα is an agreed sign, a token; the use of ξυνθήματα here marks writing as something mysterious, while also expressing the uneasiness of Deianira in front of these signs (it has been suggested that here, too, an echo of the σήματα λυγρά inscribed by Proetus on the tablet given to Bellerophon may be lurking).⁶² However, it is not just the shape of the signs, it is also their content, their meaning, that is difficult to understand: the tablet is the transcription made by Heracles for himself (cf. πάλαι . . . εἰσεγραψάμην, 1165–7) of an oracle rendered at Dodona, predicting that after an absence of one year and three months Heracles would either die or live a life free from pain. Only too late do the characters understand the real meaning of the oracle, only too late do they realize that the second alternative is not an alternative: freedom from pain means death (not coincidentally at the end of the play the tree that rendered the oracle is

⁵⁹ There might be a specific point in the juxtaposition of ‘unwritten’ and ‘stable’ (ἀσφαλῆ): Antigone might be implicitly contesting here the commonly held notion that writing is more stable than words.

⁶⁰ On vv. 44–8, often suspected of being an actor’s interpolation, see the excellent defence of Davies 1991: 66, pointing out how ‘the crucial information is allowed to leak out slowly and at dramatically effective stages of the play . . . as . . . a progressive, climactic revelation of truth’.

⁶¹ Magini 1998: 41–2, with bibliography.

⁶² Davies 1991: 93, with further references.

characterized as an ‘oak of many tongues’, πολυγλώσσου δρυός, 1168).⁶³ The mysteriousness and obscurity of the written document is thus brought back to the ambiguities of oracular speech; these will be clarified by Heracles in person at the end of the play. But for much of the play, the tablet with its mysterious writing functions as a substitute for the absent Heracles.

Besides Heracles’ tablet, another tablet haunts Deianira, one of her own making; but the audience will learn of its existence only after it has exerted its power. Having learnt about Iole, Deianira proposes to give to the herald Lichas a ‘message of words’ (λόγων τ’ ἐπιστολάς, 493) and a gift, and to this end enters the house; meanwhile, the chorus sings of the mighty power of the Cyprian goddess, narrating how Achelous and Heracles fought for Deianira. When Deianira, soon after, re-enters the scene, it is to explain to the chorus what she has done: she is sending Heracles a tunic, on which she has smeared the blood of the Centaur Nessus. This blood (an ancient gift, παλαιὸν δῶρον, hidden in a vase of bronze kept in the house, 555–6) was the result of Heracles’ shooting an arrow at the Centaur, as the latter, taken by desire for Deianira, had laid hands on her (again, a story of desire, similar to the desire of Heracles for Iole, and of Achelous for Deianira, remembered both in the prologue and in the song of the chorus). While exhaling his last breath, the Centaur gave Deianira instructions, which she now repeats literally, in direct speech, as if the Centaur were still speaking: the blood, if she would collect it and keep it, would be a charm controlling the mind of Heracles (ἔσται φρενός σοι τοῦτο κλητήριον | τῆς Ἡρακλείας, 575–6), so that he would never love another woman. Nessus’ words too are duplicitous, just like the oracle concerning Heracles, true and false at the same time: after his death, Heracles will not be able to love any other woman. The efficacy of the blood will prove terrible; but the words of the Centaur can be shown to have already exercised a charm over the mind of Deianira. She is still hesitating (that is why she consults the chorus), but her precise remembrance of the words of the Centaur shows that she too has been seized by the fatal force of desire, and not just now, but since that time.⁶⁴

Later, after having sent the robe, Deianira will be overcome by fear, realizing that the wool with which she has dyed the robe is vanishing, crumbling; she will then go back to the words of the Centaur and to her own attitude towards them with a new understanding. This time, she promises to tell the entire story (678): for

παρήκα θεσμῶν οὐδέν, ἀλλ’ ἐσφζόμην, | χαλκῆς ὅπως δύσνιπτον ἐκ δέλτου γραφήν
(Trach. 682–3).

‘I neglected none of the instructions [of the Centaur], but observed them, like writing hard to wash away from a bronze tablet.’ (Trans. Lloyd-Jones)

There are a number of striking features in these two lines. First, the usual metaphor of writing on the tablet of memory is here replaced by a comparison.

⁶³ See Magini 1998: 38–40 for an excellent discussion of the passage. Davies 1991: 253 defends Elmsley’s and Dobree’s conjecture ἐξεγραψάμεν at 1167 (instead of the transmitted εἰσεγραψάμεν), adducing a parallel passage from Ar. Av. 982: (χρησμός) ὃν ἐγὼ παρὰ τὰ πολλῶν ἐξεγραψάμεν. In both Aristophanes and Sophocles (independently of whether one changes the transmitted text of the latter), the middle voice indicates that the consulter of the oracle had the answer written out for him.

⁶⁴ See Segal 1986: 94–5.

Deianira remembers, preserves the exact words, as a writing hard to wash off does: she becomes herself a writing. Then, there is the qualification ‘brazen’ for the tablet: this is the only time in drama that such a precision is given.⁶⁵ Here this epithet serves to emphasize the hardness, the stability with which the writing has implanted itself in Deianira’s mind, as opposed to the ease with which a message written on a waxed tablet could be erased; and to show how, in Deianira’s mind, the Centaur’s words have risen to the level of an ordinance, a law (*θεσμοί*, 682).⁶⁶ But the reference to bronze also helps correlate the tablet, the poison (hidden in a bronze vase, *λέβητι χαλκέῳ κεκρυμμένον*, 556), and the robe (folded, *συμπτύξας*, and sent in a container, *ζυγάστρω*, 691–2, whose material is, however, not specified). As for the *hapax* *δύσνιπτος*, it emphasizes the permanency of the writing; and yet it is not really appropriate, since bronze would be engraved, not (only) painted. It is, however, exactly this lack of appropriateness that brings about a deeper layer of understanding through an intertextual gesture towards Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*: the writing difficult to wash away, a writing that is a person, Deianira, will be wiped out all too easily, exactly as Cassandra had likened the humans to a *γραφή* that one stroke of a sponge may wipe away when misfortune hits (Aesch. *Ag.* 1329).

The dyed robe is thus the transposition into artefact of the words written in Deianira’s mind as on a tablet. This robe she sends to Heracles, both as a gift⁶⁷ and to accomplish her vow for his safety. (It is the first time such a vow is mentioned—from the point of view of the audience, Deianira is advancing fast down the path of dissimulation; as will be understood later, she had all along kept a secret in her house—the poison, and in herself—the ‘writing’: the second is but the internalization of the first). The herald, Lichas, pledges to behave like a good messenger (this time: for he had delivered a false message earlier), and to bring directly the sealed vessel with the robe to Heracles, adding to it the assurance of her words (*πίστιν λόγων*, 623), an expression that closely recalls the *λόγων ἐπιστολάς* promised by Deianira before entering the house.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ A *δέλτος*, ‘tablet’, is simply a *δέλτος*, although some words may imply a certain type of material, such as *πέυκη*, literally ‘fir’, and hence something made of wood, in Eur. *Hipp.* 1253–4 (see below, 221).

⁶⁶ Magini 1998: 42, who compares Plut. *Rect. rat. aud.* 47 E: Cleanthes and Xenocrates, being slow in learning, compared themselves to bronze tablets (*πινακίσσι χαλκαῖς*), on which words are incised slowly, but which retain them faithfully.

⁶⁷ A gift from Deianira to Heracles, in exchange of his own gift (Iole?), is first mentioned at 494, *ἀντὶ δώρων δώρα*; at 555 the term refers to the *παλαιὸν δῶρον* of the Centaur, old as Heracles’ tablet is old; at 663 *δώρημ’* is used for the peplos, as also at 668, in a question of the chorus; at 692 Deianira recounts how she has put her gift, *δῶρον*, in a container—but she begins to fear; at 758 the *δώρημα* is qualified, in Hyllus’ words, as *θανάσιμον πέπλον*; at 776 Heracles receives the *δώρημα*; at 871–2 the Nurse connects the gift to the death of Deianira: *ὦ παῖδες, ὡς ἄρ’ ἡμῖν οὐ συμκράν κακῶν | ἤρξεν τὸ δῶρον Ἡρακλεῖ τὸ πόμπιμον*.

⁶⁸ *πίστις* is another important theme, running through the play: at 77 *πιστά* defines the prophecies (*μαντεῖα*) left by Heracles to Deianira, i.e. the tablet: reliable, certainly, but definitely obscure; at 286 Lichas defines himself as *πιστός*, while lying to Deianira; at 398 Deianira asks of Lichas whether he will give her the truth, *τὸ πιστὸν τῆς ἀληθείας*; at 541 she marvels at Heracles’ being known as *πιστός*, he who has sent home this girl; at 588 and 590 the term refers to the chorus and Deianira’s belief in the power of the ‘love philtre’; at 623 it appears in Lichas’ promise to deliver Deianira’s faithful words; at the end of the play it marks Hyllus’ attitude towards his father (1182, 1251). But for Hyllus, not many of the characters mentioned in the play are ‘reliable’; the writing in a sense is, but it perpetuates unreliable information.

So what are the connotations, what is the function of writing in *Trachiniae*? In the play, writing is, in both cases, the faithful transcription of an oral message: if it turns out to be deceptive, the reason lies not in any intrinsic 'deceitfulness' of writing. Communication in a larger sense is at issue in the play, and writing is only part of it; with Lichas, for instance, the play offers an instance of untruthful speech, as it does with the words Deianira sends to Heracles. However, the two tablets allow for the inclusion of a deep chronological dimension, whereby the past is brought tangibly (physically) to bear on the present: the words of Nessus (or of the oracle at Dodona) might have been forgotten but for their inscription; moreover, in the case of Deianira's metaphorical writing what had once been a loud pronouncement is silenced and made for ever private through an inner, secret writing, a writing that mediates between the civilized world of humans and the bestial one of the Centaur, and that renders possible a second performance of the very words of the Centaur.⁶⁹ But most of all, the use of writing for both pronouncements, the oracular one and the words of the Centaur, marks (a posteriori) Heracles' death as something inescapable, fixed in writing years before the beginning of the action.⁷⁰

If no other Sophoclean play refers explicitly to writing, a number of fragments present tantalizing references to it. Thus, the fr. 144 Radt, from the *Achaion syllogos* ('Gathering of the Achaeans'), has someone, probably Odysseus, suggesting to another character (Agamemnon) that 'you, on your chair, and holding the folds of the writing, mark off any who has sworn the oath but is not present' (σὺ δ' ἐν θρόνοισι γραμμάτων πτυχὰς ἔχων | νέμ' εἴ τις οὐ πάρεστιν ὃς ξυνώμοσεν). The writing here mentioned is a list, a long list since it has folds, and an authoritative one, deriving its authority from that of the person who reads it, sitting on a throne. Power and written lists, seen as instruments of control, in this passage go hand in hand. Writing was also certainly at least alluded to in the plays connected with Palamedes; and a few more references to writing, of uncertain interpretation, are present in plays linked to the Trojan war.⁷¹ In particular, writing may have played a role in the plot of Sophocles' *Poimenes*, a play that narrated the arrival of the Greeks at Troy and, among other things, the deaths of Protesilaus and Cycnus (the fragments do not allow any further steps in reconstructing the play—it cannot actually be determined whether this is a tragedy or a satyr play).⁷² The exact meaning, in the context of the play, of the expression 'Phoenician letters' (fr. 514

⁶⁹ A point stressed in Segal 1985: 223. Again the comparison with *defixiones* is striking: in quite a few cases, re-actualization of the writing through reading it aloud changes the magic power of the tablet, activating it or rendering it inactive. See Davies 1991: 156 on *παλαιὸν δῶρον* at 555: the gift is old, the tablet is old, Nessus persuaded Deianira long before (1141–2).

⁷⁰ See on these issues Magini 1998: 44–7, although I would disagree with her final view of writing in this play as entirely positive; and Steiner 1994: 84–6, who emphasizes the talismatic status of Heracles' oracular tablet.

⁷¹ Fr. 429 Radt, from the *Nauplius navigans*, mentions the invention of *πessà pentégramma*, the draughts-board with five lines; fr. 177 Radt, from the *Helene apaitesis*, is irrecoverably corrupted; it is a very negative portrayal of Helen, depicted as she 'tortures her cheek, lately faded, with pencils that she digs in' (Lloyd-Jones' translation).

⁷² See Rosen 2003, who does not, however, discuss fr. 514 Radt. The hypothesis of a satyr play is attractive: it makes sense of some aspects difficult to explain otherwise. References to writing may have been relatively frequent in satyr plays: see discussion below, 236–9.

Radt = Hesych. φ 688 Φοινικίους γράμμασι. Σοφοκλῆς Ποιμέσιν. ἐπεὶ δοκεῖ Κάδμος αὐτὰ ἐκ Φοινίκης κεκομμέναι), is unclear. Is this an allusion meant to stress, for whatever reason, the Phoenician origin of the alphabet? A way of referring in general to the alphabet? Or might a letter (or letters) written in Phoenician script (i.e. in a non-Greek alphabet) have played a role in the plot? Why writing should have been mentioned at all in a play narrating the arrival of the Greeks at Troy, a play in which the chorus was formed by shepherds, is anyone's guess. However, an informative element is offered by fr. 520 Radt, *παρασάγγαι*, a Persian measure of distance, but here, in this specific context, a Persian word for messengers.⁷³ Possibly the reference to Phoenician letters was not just a passing, incidental one, and (foreign) writing played some role in the plot.⁷⁴

Finally, Philomela's weaving of her story on a 'patterned gown' (fr. 586 Radt, from the *Tereus*) will also have been a type of writing: fixed signs are, however, in this play needed to overcome not distance, spatial or temporal, but enforced silence. Already in the Homeric poems, weaving had been presented as the female way of narrating a story (or of suspending it: think of Helen and Penelope). In the *Tereus*, weaving substituted for writing in a situation in which communication through direct speech had been made impossible by the brutal mutilation inflicted on Philomela. The play is lost, so it is impossible to know what exactly was woven on the cloth; writing seems on the whole more likely than a pictorial representation.⁷⁵ At any rate, a verse quoted by Aristotle in his *Poetics* (1454^b30), 'And there is "the voice of the loom" in Sophocles' *Tereus*' (καὶ ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Τηρεῖ ἡ τῆς κερκίδος φωνή, fr. 595 Radt), shows that the shuttle was endowed with a voice, as is more usually the case with tablets.⁷⁶

In his use of writing as a metaphor for a permanent remembering, Sophocles thus follows in Aeschylus' footsteps; but he also innovates, when he reformulates the image as a comparison in *Trachiniae*, or when he uses the image of writing oaths in the water to highlight the untrustworthiness of female discourse. Besides

⁷³ Fr. 520 Radt = Claudius Casilo, *Παρά τοῖς Ἀπτικοῖς ῥήτορσι ζητούμενα* ed. Miller, Mél. 397 ≈ Lex. Rhet. Cantabr. 32 (= Lex. Gr. Min. 83), 6 Houtsma: σαγγάνδαι δὲ οἱ ἀποστελλόμενοι καλοῦνται. Σοφοκλῆς δὲ ἐν Ποιμέσι καὶ Εὐριπίδης ἐν Σκυρίαῖς παρασάγγας αὐτοὺς κεκλήκασιν. ἐχρῆν δὲ εἰπεῖν σαγγάνδας· ὁ γὰρ παρασάγγης μέτρον ἐστὶν ὁδοῦ. Cf. Hesych. π 658 παρασάγγη. <ἀγ>γέλαι οἱ Πέρσαι τοὺς διαγγέλλοντας οὕτως λέγουσι. The play may have been performed in the sixties (Heubeck 1979: 108; but see Radt's sceptical comment).

⁷⁴ Corcella 1986: 60–1 discusses the passage, and concludes that here *phoinikia* is simply an 'epithetum ornans', and that *phoinikia grammata* simply means 'the alphabet', comparing with two verses of Timon of Phlius (active in the fourth century BC): γραμματικῇ, τῆς οὐ τις ἀνασκοπῇ οὐδ' ἀνάθρησις | ἀνδρὶ διδασκομένῳ Φοινικικὰ σήματα Κάδμου, *Suppl. Hell.* 835.

⁷⁵ Dobrov 1993: 204–6 and nn. 38 and 47, 222–3 (writing—and glossectomy—as Sophoclean innovations); Fitzpatrick 2001: 97–8, who advances the suggestion that literacy may have been an issue in a play featuring the confrontation of Greek and barbarian. For Steiner 1994: 36–8, woven garment and writing collapse into one token.

⁷⁶ One would expect the woven tissue to speak, rather than the instrument (the loom or the shuttle); but the notion that the *kerkís* sings is well-engrained in Greek tradition (see Restani 1995, and cf. Soph. fr. 890: *κερκίδος ὕμνοις*, with P.Oxy. 4807 and the further remarks and references of Mülke (*ad loc.*); Eur. fr. 528a K.: *κερκίδος αἰδοῦ*; Eur. *IT* 222–3; and metaphorically, *μήδεα ἀδαμαντίναις ὑφαίνεται κερκίδιν αἶσα* Lyr. Adesp. ap. Stob. 1. 5. 11= fr. 1018 Campbell). Ample discussion of weaving in tragedy in Stieber 2011: 315–34 (see in particular 315–6 for Sophocles' *Tereus*, and 331–4 for weaving metaphors).

metaphorical inscription in lists, actual reading off a list was probably presented on the stage. This might have been a further innovation. To judge from what tragedies survive, the hint of written laws in the *Antigone* was likewise new. Two written documents played a central role in one of Sophocles' surviving plays, their content, revealed bit by bit, accompanying and steering the course of the action. Finally, it is uncertain whether letters were brought on stage (the *Andromeda* is an unlikely candidate, but the *Iobates* is a plausible one, as well as fr. 784 Radt); issues of communication, involving both oral and written transmission of messages, were certainly touched upon. Comparison with the Aeschylean use of words from the stem *γραφ-* to denote paintings shows another difference: there is not one instance in the extant verses of Sophocles of the use of *γραφή* to indicate a painting (the closest instance might be the already mentioned writing difficult to wash out of a bronze tablet in *Trachiniae* 683, which may resonate with the image used by Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*). Possibly Sophocles was not interested in a connection between language and the visual arts; but this impression may well depend on the unrepresentative nature of the surviving evidence.⁷⁷ Thus while references to writing and written documents are not evenly distributed in all extant plays, written documents could be physically brought on the stage as props; in at least one play they have an important part in the plot.

5.1.3. Euripides

A marked change is visible in Euripides. Metaphorical uses of writing to indicate intellectual activity are absent; there are in fact very few instances of metaphorical writing altogether.⁷⁸ However, the range covered by forms of writing is much wider, and includes letters, laws, references to books, funerary epigrams, victory inscriptions, paintings, in other words, the whole gamut of 'real-life' writings that surrounded the audience. Some of the Euripidean references to writing simply continue the earlier tradition: for instance, the image of the painting easily wiped out is taken up in a fragment of the *Peleus*, but modified into a comparison.⁷⁹

Euripides' description of images (especially paintings) through words employing the *γραφ-* stem, while corresponding to one of the normal uses of the term in Greek, is often very specific in its pairing of image and sound. In the *Troades* (produced 415 BC), for instance, Hecuba claims never to have set foot on a ship, yet to know about them from seeing them in pictures and by hearsay: the two channels of

⁷⁷ Hall 2006: 115 n. 60, on the basis of the lost *Tereus*; but see above for the likelihood that a textual message, rather than a pictorial one, may have been woven in the peplos handed to Procne.

⁷⁸ *Γραμμή*, the 'finishing line', is used twice metaphorically, in fr. 169 from the *Antigone* (of evils), and in the *Electra*, v. 956 (of life). An instance of metaphorical 'writing off' a list appears in the *Electra*, v. 1073: the heroine affirms of a wife who takes care of her beauty when her husband is away, 'strike her off the list as a whore', *διάγραφ' ὡς οὖσαν κακὴν*, possibly echoing Clytaemestra's words in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* 699 (see above, 190).

⁷⁹ Fr. 618 Kannicht: *τὸν ὄλβον οὐδὲν οὐδαμοῦ κρίνω βροτοῖς, | ὃν γ' ἐξαλείφει ῥᾶον ἢ γραφὴν θεός*. The 'wiping out' motif reappears in fr. 1041. On 'wiping out' see now Stieber 2011: 172–8, with an in-depth discussion of the uses of *ἐξαλείφω*.

information are put side by side.⁸⁰ Similarly, in a striking fragment of an unidentified play, painting and speech are paired in their inability to describe what an evil a woman is: 'there could be no such picture drawn nor could speech describe it' (οὐδ' ἂν γένοιτο γράμμα τοιοῦτον γραφή | οὐδ' ἂν λόγος δείξειεν).⁸¹ Another instance of this pairing occurs in the *Hippolytus* (produced 428 BC): the eponymous character defends himself from knowing anything about 'such a practice' (love) except for what he has heard or seen in paintings (οὐκ οἶδα πᾶξιν τήνδε πλὴν λόγῳ κλύων | γραφῇ τε λεύσσω, 1004–5). In fifth-century thought seeing (ὄψις) is considered the best among the tools of knowledge, while hearing (ἀκοή), being mediated by some other narrative, usually receives only second place. Here, however, they are on the same level, because the seeing is 'distanced' by the fact that what is seen is not the thing itself, but a *γραφή*, an image: this kind of seeing, the seeing of letters or images, is on the same cognitive level as hearing, since letters or paintings 'speak'. References to paintings or woven images are also made in the *Ion* (produced between 418 and 413 BC) through the use of *γραφή* and *γράμματα*, respectively at v. 271 (and here again, the visual/written source of information is paired with an auditory one, *μεμύθεται*, 265), and at v. 1146.⁸² And there is an imaged use of *ὑπογράφω* in the *Heracles*: the hero, having recovered sanity but not knowing yet what he has done in his attack of madness, asks his father 'tell me, if you are sketching in outline some new change to my life' (εἴπ' εἴ τι καινὸν ὑπογράφῃ τῷμῳ βίῳ, 1118). This is a particularly interesting instance, because of its strong hint of metatheatricity: as Foley has pointed out, the madness of Heracles is here 'written over' the story of Heracles: the hero feels that he is being 'redrawn' or rewritten; but the use of *ὑπογράφω* may imply that the rewriting was already there from the beginning, underwriting Heracles' life, and that it is only now becoming evident.⁸³

Literal writing is conspicuously absent from the *Phoenician Women*'s version of the Aeschylean shield scene. The only remnants of what had figured so importantly in Aeschylus are to be found on the two occasions when *γραφή* is employed for images. The likening of Hippomedon's dazzling face to a picture, possibly silhouetted (ἀστερωπὸς <ὥσπερ> ἐν γραφαῖσιν, 129–30), is one of the relatively few passages where a male is compared to an image; it elicits terror rather than pity. The word is also used in the picture of a hundred snakes filling up the shield of Adrastus (ἐκατὸν ἐχίδναις ἀσπίδ' ἐκπληρῶν γραφῇ, *Phoen.* 1135, the second shield scene).⁸⁴ Thus, where Aeschylus in his *Seven*, even while using images,

⁸⁰ Eur. *Tro.* 686–7: αὐτὴ μὲν οὐπω ναὸς εἰσέβην σκάφος, | γραφῇ δ' ἰδοῦσα καὶ κλύουσ' ἐπίσταμαι, where the *graphe* appears as the source of both visual and sonorous information. Cf. Stieber 2011: 221–2 ('Paintings as Instructors').

⁸¹ Fr. 1059, 5–6; I follow the translation of Collard and Cropp 2008; see also their note on the strained Greek of l. 5, for which a number of conjectures have been advanced.

⁸² Ecphrasis is a prominent aspect of the play; Zeitlin 1994: 147–56 shows how *Ion* is so deeply immersed in images that he is not convinced by Creusa's words concerning his father, and needs a visual sign: the final epiphany of Athena.

⁸³ Foley 1985: 94 n. 54. For a detailed discussion of the meaning of *ὑπογράφω* (to sketch in outline, as in the 'underdrawing' preparatory for a painting; hence here to provide a partial vision) see Stieber 2011: 237–40.

⁸⁴ See Mastronarde 1994: 187–9 for discussion of the difficult passage concerning Hippomedon, and Stieber 2011: 262–7; Zeitlin 1994: 174–8 for the first viewing (*Antigone's*), 178–85 for the second, and 171–96 for a general discussion of how 'hyperviewing' (moments in which words and image join in pictorial language, Zeitlin 1994: 145, thus forcing the spectators to reflect on their own viewing)

had avoided the term *γραφή*, instead focusing with this term on the ‘literal’ writing on the shield, Euripides here shifts the term onto the images and dispenses with ‘literal’ writing. While it is absolutely true that references in tragedy to something seen only in art generally imply ‘the speaker’s lack of first-hand experience or the monstrosity or foreignness of the thing referred to’,⁸⁵ it is all the more fascinating to realize that a form of ‘writing’ is the means to apprehend and understand the unknown.

Of course, explicitly creating ‘images’ implies creating viewers, internal ones but also—implicitly—external ones, the audience. This is apparent in a striking passage of the *Hecuba*. On finding out about the death of Polydorus, the queen addresses Agamemnon, asking him to punish the assassin of her son and show respect for divine justice. To reinforce her plea, she adds:

οἴκτιρον ἡμᾶς, ὥς γραφεύς τ’ ἀποσταθεῖς | ἰδοῦ με κἀνάθρησον οἷ’ ἔχω κακά.
(*Hec.* 807–8)

‘Have pity on us, and standing back like a painter look on me and scrutinize the evils I bear.’

Hecuba objectifies herself and her sufferings on the stage (the actor may have taken a striking pose, possibly modelled on some famous contemporary art-work, or on a well-known *schema*); she presents herself as a painting, for Agamemnon (and for herself) to look at—but for the audience as well: she thus presents a spectacle of second degree.⁸⁶ What Hecuba does to Agamemnon is no less interesting than what she does to herself: she puts him in the position of the artist—painter, but also writer: *γραφεύς*, and, in this play, in this moment, the ‘author’, the person in control of her destiny. This is definitely a case of ‘hyper-viewing’—the audience is invited to look at Hecuba as much as Agamemnon is—and there may be here more than a hint of metatheatrical reflection. As we shall see, Agamemnon will refuse to be put in the role of the artist, he will refuse to help. What plays itself out in this passage is the uncertainty, the lack of firm distinction, and ultimately the struggle over the roles of subject and object, of painter/writer and image.⁸⁷

Just as interesting are other new elements. For the first time in extant tragedy, there are explicit references to written laws. One appears fleetingly in the *Ion*: having learnt of Apollo’s violence towards a friend of the Athenian visitor, Ion wonders, ‘How is it right that you who prescribe laws for men incur a charge of

functions in this play; Hall 2006: 134 for the gendered distinction between eliciting pity and eliciting terror.

⁸⁵ Mastronarde 1994: 187, who lists, besides *Phoen.* 129, Aesch. *Suppl.* 282–3; *Eum.* 49–51; Eur. *Hipp.* 1005; *Tro.* 687; *Ion* 271.

⁸⁶ Zeitlin 1994: 142; Steiner 2001: 51; Stieber 2011: 223–5. This outward move of Hecuba’s own self has been prepared by vv. 726–51: when Agamemnon enters and addresses her directly (726, ‘Hecuba’, at beginning of verse), she does not answer, but addresses herself (*δύστην*—*ἐμαντῆν γὰρ λέγω λέγουσα σέ*, | *Ἐκάβη—τί δράσω*, ‘Unhappy one—in saying you, Hecuba, I mean myself—what shall I do?’, 736–7), in a long interior monologue (736–8, 741–2, 745–6, and 749–51, until at 752 she addresses Agamemnon, again at the beginning of the verse), punctuated by Agamemnon’s uncomprehending remarks.

⁸⁷ Hall 2006: 133–4.

lawlessness?’ (*Ion* 442–3: πῶς οὖν δίκαιον τοὺς νόμους ὑμᾶς βροτοῖς | γράψαντας αὐτοὺς ἀνομίαν ὀφλισκάνειν;). The significance of this passage is not so much in what the text states, for the use of writing here is hardly likely to be pregnant, but rather in the fact that by now (the *Ion* was produced c.413 BC) the notion of written laws is so self-evident that it is used also for the higher laws of the gods.⁸⁸ The mild questioning of the *Ion* appeared also, in a much more radical form, in one of Euripides’ *Melanippe*. The play is lost; but in one of the preserved fragments, a female character (*Melanippe*, or possibly *Hippo*) mocks the foolish belief in a distant divine justice, based on written records, and asserts the existence of a closer, immanent justice:

‘You think crimes leap up to the gods on wings, and someone writes them on Zeus’ folded tablet (κᾶπειτ’ ἐν Διὸς δέλτου πτυχαῖς γράφειν τιν’ αὐτά), and Zeus looks at them and delivers justice to men? Even the whole sky would not suffice for Zeus to write (Διὸς γράφοντος) men’s sins on it, nor could he study them and send punishment for each of them. In fact, Justice is somewhere close . . .’

(Eur. fr. 506 Kannicht, trans. Collard and Cropp)

Euripides is here making fun of the notion of a ‘book-keeping Zeus’; as we have seen, the idea of the tablets of destiny can be traced back to Mesopotamia, but it is not deeply rooted in Greek thought. There are no other instances of it apart from the ‘tablet of Zeus’ mentioned in Aeschylus’ *Dike* fragment (fr. 281a Radt), discussed above. It can actually be argued that Euripides is here alluding directly to the Aeschylean passage, pushing to its paradoxical limits the earlier formulation, felt as sufficiently new to attract attention.⁸⁹

More interesting are the two other Euripidean passages in which written laws are mentioned as a positive feature of the polis because they ensure equality for the poor and for the wealthy, or on the contrary as one of the many constraints that bind men. The latter, negative aspect is highlighted by *Hecuba* in the homonymous play.⁹⁰ When she discovers Polydorus’ fate, the queen asks for revenge, appealing to the strong *nomos* that makes men believe in the gods and live according to a distinction between justice and injustice; if this *nomos* were destroyed, there would be no more justice among men (798–805). She then offers herself and her evils for Agamemnon to look at and take pity on. Because Agamemnon hesitates, she adds a personal reason, Cassandra, and entreats him again, once more using an image from art, but this time adding a voice to the art-work. This second supplication elicits from the chorus the comment that it is terrible how *nomoi* determine our necessities, turning former enemies into friends and former friends into enemies (846–9): the plural *nomoi* that establish

⁸⁸ Lee (1997: 207). This passage does not say anything as to the Greek gods’ literacy: the writing is metaphorical, the gods ‘write’ laws for man, in the sense that they dictate them.

⁸⁹ So West 1997: 561–2 and n. 35, who accepts that the metaphorical use of writing on the tablet to indicate memory might have come to the Greeks together with the tablet itself (the word, for it, *delto*, has a Semitic origin), but stresses the alienness of the notion of a recording Zeus; so already Solmsen 1944. Collard and Cropp 2008: 609 refer to West, but also state: ‘An old belief reflecting the centralized administrative record-keeping of the ancient Near East, and recommended in Aesch. fr. 281a.’

⁹⁰ See Collard 1991: 23–32 for the main issues of the play, 34–5 for the date, and 174 for vv. 864–7. The treatment of *nomos* and *nomoi* in the *Hecuba* is addressed in Segal 1993: 191–213, esp. 192–205, where he stresses that the gap between free and slave can be bridged from above (the strong *nomos*) or from below (all men are slaves)—the in-between is open to negotiation.

necessities, in other words, that are limiting, are implicitly contrasted with the singular, strong *nomos*. Although at the personal level admitting to a feeling of pity for Hecuba, Agamemnon refuses, however, to do anything officially, out of fear of the army (a larger contrast between public and private runs through this passage); in answer, Hecuba, by now herself a slave, remarks on the lack of freedom of man:

οὐκ ἔστι θνητῶν ὅστις ἔστ' ἐλεύθερος· | ἢ χρημάτων γὰρ δοῦλός ἐστιν ἢ τύχης | ἢ πλῆθος
αὐτὸν πόλεος ἢ νόμων γραφαί | εἴργουσι χρεῖσθαι μὴ κατὰ γνώμην τρόποις.

(Eur. *Hec.* 864–7)

‘There is no mortal who is free: either he is a slave to money or to chance, or the masses of the city or written laws prevent him from following his bent according to his own judgement.’

This remark takes its meaning from the context of the play. Hecuba had already (vainly) invoked an *isos nomos* (egalitarian law) when asking Odysseus to save Polyxena; but Odysseus had pointed at the necessity of individual, specific *poleis*, to honour the most valiant men. The free acceptance of her fate by Polyxena had been a source of pride for Hecuba: notwithstanding her ruin, the queen had taken comfort in this inner freedom. Now, Hecuba has to accept that there is no freedom. But why writing (written laws) here? The other categories mentioned in vv. 864–7 all find a respondent in the play (Polymestor has acted from greed; Agamemnon does not act for fear of the army; Hecuba, her children, and the Trojans are victims of chance); thus, the written laws must here coincide with the ‘laws’ in the plural, the principle that had been invoked by Odysseus as regulating the various *poleis*. The higher kind of law, equal for all (the *ison* stressed at vv. 291–2, νόμος δ' ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς τ' ἐλευθέροις ἴσος | καὶ τοῖσι δούλοις αἵματος κείται πέρι, ‘there is a law in your country, the same for free men and for slaves, concerning blood’, and at vv. 798–805) is contrasted in the course of the play with plural *nomoi*; the writtenness of the laws in v. 866 may be meant to underline the man-made and limited character of the latter, as opposed to the higher law. In a sense, the written laws mentioned by Hecuba are also egalitarian, since they apply to everyone; their being paired with greed, fear of the masses, and chance, however, makes it clear that it is a negative equality Hecuba is thinking of here.

As for the positive side of written law, this is stressed in two famous verses of the *Suppliant Women*, pronounced by Theseus in his answer to the Theban herald: against the latter, who affirms proudly that he comes from a city ruled by one man and not by the rabble, a city where no man can fool the others with slick, flattering words, Theseus stresses that in a city held by a tyrant there are no common laws (νόμοι κοινοί, 430–1), for one person only has power, holding the law by himself—and this is unjust (καὶ τόδ' οὐκ ἐστ' ἴσον, 432). However,

γεγραμμένων δὲ τῶν νόμων ὁ τ' ἀσθενὴς | ὁ πλούσιός τε τὴν δίκην ἴσῃν ἔχει.

‘When the laws are written, both the weak and the rich have justice equally.’

(Eur. *Suppl.* 433–4)

As pointed out by Stinton, this is the only passage in all of fifth-century literature stating explicitly that written laws are a guarantee of equality, not in itself a self-evident notion: ‘statutory laws in states where they were not written

down, e.g. Sparta, were not thought any the less binding, or less *nomoi*, on that account.⁹¹ However, the historical context (e.g. the move of written laws by Ephialtes from the acropolis to agora; the appearance of formulae of disclosure, such as σκοπεῖν τῷ βουλομένῳ, 'so that anyone who desires may see', attested in five Athenian inscriptions all dated to the 430s/420s; and more generally the emphasis in inscriptions on publishing their text) shows that the idea that written laws help enforce equality (and democracy) must have been widely diffused.⁹² The notion that writing down the laws was a central element of their polis' identity may thus have been widely shared in Athens; even so, it is remarkable that it should have surfaced, and so forcefully, in this one tragedy only. It is probably not an accident that the play is *Suppliant Women*, a play in which persuasion and writing are presented in an optimistic perspective; and it is certainly not an accident that these words are put in the mouth of the 'democratic' Theseus.⁹³

This same play presents at its very conclusion another instance of real writing, functioning exactly as in real-life interstate alliances. After the battle, Theseus gives back the bones of the Seven to the Argives as a present from himself and from the city, adding that they should remember this favour, and repeat his words to their children, handing down the memory of the help they received from Athens from generation to generation (vv. 1169–73). The Argives agree. They are already leaving when Athena appears and stops the proceedings: Theseus should not give away the bones so lightly. He must first require a sworn oath from the Argives that they will never attack Attica (1185–95). Not only that: sacrifices must be made over a bronze tripod which Heracles once ordered Theseus to set up at the Pythian shrine (1196–200). Over the tripod, Athena orders,

'cut the throats of three sheep; then engrave the oaths within the tripod's hollow belly (ἐγγραψον ὄρκους τρίποδος ἐν κοίλῳ κύτει); and then deliver it to the god who watches over Delphi to keep, a witness and a memorial for Hellas of the oaths (μνημεῖά θ' ὄρκων μαρτύρημά θ' Ἑλλάδι).' (*Suppl.* 1201–4)

The oral memory, with which Theseus had been content, an oral memory entrusted to the Argives to preserve, is under Athena's directions changed into a ritual (oaths, sacrifice) of which the inscription on bronze forms an important part. As for the order that the inscribed vase, by now symbolizing that memory, be located in a Panhellenic centre, Delphi, following a procedure that was commonly practised by the Greek cities, it serves the purpose of removing the memory of the

⁹¹ Stinton (in Collard 1975: 441–2); Stinton makes it clear that the distinction between *agraphoi nomoi* (divine, natural, universal, international laws) and man-made, positive laws of particular cities is very different from the point at issue here. On written and unwritten laws, and their authority, see Harris 2006: 41–61 (unwritten esp. at 45; relationship between unwritten and written, 53–7). For the uses of writing in Sparta, see Thomas 1992: 136–7, and below, 320–6.

⁹² Ephialtes: Anaximenes of Lampsacus, *FGrH* 72 F 13 (although note Wilamowitz's sceptical position on this, with Jacoby's comments, *ad loc.*); analysis of disclosure formulae: Hedrick 1999: 410–11 (list in his appendix 2). One does not have to believe that this notion is true (and for instance the issue of the authority ordering the writing down of the laws is not addressed; yet this is crucial), nor that it was shared over all of Greece (it emphatically was not). But the law cited by Andoc. *Myst.* 83–6 (86: ἀγράφονόμῳ τὰς ἀρχὰς μὴ χρῆσθαι) attests to the centrality of written laws at Athens; later political theory connected the development of law with the beginnings of writing, cf. Plato, *Leg.* 3, 680 A, and the detailed discussion in Harris 2006.

⁹³ Turato 1976: 181–3.

deed from its initial Argive–Athenian context. Note also that the main purpose of the writing does not seem here to be publicity, for the oaths are incised inside the vase: the writing on the bronze of this very special, ‘historical’ tripod (once given to Theseus by Heracles, and thus reflecting earlier connections between the two cities) has a fundamentally sacred, ritual value.⁹⁴

This ‘contemporary’ approach to writing is present in numerous other passages. Both victory epigrams and funerary epigrams enter with Euripides the text of tragedy, in their ‘written’, epigraphic form, and not any more as voices of passers-by, but with significant modifications. In the *Troades*, a funerary epigram is smoothly incorporated into the tragic text, its presence signposted by the verb of writing that precedes the epitaph, by the reference to a poet as the author (the term chosen for this is *mousopoios*), and by the term ‘epigram’ in the following verse. In arranging the burial of Astyanax, Hecuba wonders

τί καί ποτε | γράψειεν ἄν σε μousοποιός ἐν τάφῳ; | Τὸν παῖδα τόνδ’ ἔκτειναν Ἀργεῖοί
ποτε | δείσαντες; αἰσχρὸν τοῦτίγραμμά γ’ Ἑλλάδι. (*Tro.* 1188–91)

‘What could a poet write upon your tomb? “This child once, out of fear, the Argives killed”? Shameful epigram for Greece.’

The epigram is written with the language and the hallmarks of real epigrams (the initial deictic gesture, the indefinite ποτε), although of course in iambic trimeters. The irony resides in the text: in the contrast between the killing of a child and the very gesture of erecting a monument.⁹⁵ The *epos* had already provided a model for some play with the conventions of epigram; in a striking passage of the *Iliad*, for instance, the funerary monument had been made to serve the memory not of the dead, but of the victor, in what was already a distortion of the genre.⁹⁶ An equally unorthodox use of generic features can be seen in other plays of Euripides. In *Alcestris*, for instance, the chorus at the end of its song on Necessity provides an imaginary monument for the eponymous heroine, and then proceeds to pronounce the words that passers-by will say, on walking past her grave:

Αὐτα ποτὲ πρὸύθαν’ ἀνδρός, | νῦν δ’ ἔστι μάκαιρα δαίμων· | χαῖρ’, ὦ πότνι, ἐδ’ δὲ δοίης. |
τοῖα νῦν προσερούσι φήμα. (*Alc.* 1002–5)

⁹⁴ See Steiner 1994: 63–71; Day 2010: 106; on echoes of epigraphic writing in tragedy Day 2010: 59–62.

⁹⁵ On the ‘void’ of the monument, its beauty, and its permanence as signifier of death in Euripides, Pucci 2003 [1977] is fundamental; see also Segal 1993: 29–33. I keep with Kovacs the σε of the manuscript tradition, against the σῶ proposed by Dobree, and the σοι accepted by Diggle. On the use here of *mousopoios* (one of the rare instances in tragedy of the use of the language of ‘making’ rather than that of ‘song’) see Ford 2002: 138. On deictic markers in ‘epigrammatic writing’ see Day 2010: 112–20.

⁹⁶ Hector imagines spectators in future times, who on seeing the funerary monument of the enemy he has killed will say: ‘This is the *sema* of a man dead long ago, whom once brilliant Hector killed *aristeuonta*’ (*Il.* 7. 89–90). The most ancient Athenian public funerary epigram is dated to c.490–460 (*CEG* 1); the casualty lists were often closed by epigrams. Two other inscriptions, *CEG* 11 and 12, dated to the mid-fifth century and to 433/432 respectively, offer instances of public epitaphs for an individual, thus presenting a closer parallel to the situation of Astyanax here. Private funerary verse epitaphs are attested of course much earlier: in Attica the earliest might be that of Tettichos, dated to c.575–550 (*CEG* 13); *CEG* 13–76 assembles Attic private funerary verse epitaphs dated from the second half of the sixth century to the beginning of the fifth century. See Day 2010: 59 on Hector’s remarks, and *passim* for epigrammatic writing.

“This woman once (ποτέ) died for her husband’s sake, and now she is a blessed divinity.” “Hail, lady, and may you grant us good.” With such words will they address her.’

The epigram conforms to contemporary examples (but for the metre), and it shows well how commemoration works, even envisaging future reperformances in their details; but immediately afterwards, Heracles will arrive, with Alcestis in tow, defeating expectations. Hecuba’s epigram for Astyanax is, however, the only funerary one, and moreover attributed to a *μουσοποιός*, a poet, for which an inscription is explicitly imagined, if only fleetingly and paradoxically. One may well wonder if here the pause, with the explicit allusion to a poet as a composer, is not an allusion to Euripides himself and to the *Trojan Women*: after all, his play is (also) an extended funerary epigram on the victims of the Trojan war (and, of course, of the Peloponnesian war). Later, Hecuba will state that the shield of Hector, mother of countless victories, will die with the boy, and yet not die (1221–3); this part of the burial ends with the remark that if the divinity had not overturned things, ‘being unknown we would not have been sung, providing a theme for song to the Muses of men to come’ (*ἀφανείς ἂν ὄντες οὐκ ἂν ὑμνήθημεν ἂν | μούσαις αἰοιδᾶς δόντες ὑστέρων βροτῶν*, 1244–5, a line that echoes *Iliad* 6. 357–8). Song and lament are possibilities: one (lament) is actual, the other will be taken up by men to come; but the writing of a funerary epigram is in this instance not a possibility. The issue here is commemoration, and there may be in the stress on writing a reflection on the dramatist’s own possibility of guaranteeing adequate commemoration.⁹⁷

A paradoxical victory epigram figures instead in the *Phoenician Women*. As Jocasta tries to dissuade Polynices from his intent of destroying his own city, she wonders what victory monument he will be able to erect to commemorate such a victory:

καὶ σκῦλα γράψεις πῶς ἐπ’ Ἰνάχου ῥοαῖς; | Θήβας πυρώσας τάσδε Πολυνείκης θεοῖς |
ἀσπίδας ἔθηκε; (*Phoen.* 574–6)

‘And what will you inscribe on the spoils⁹⁸ by the streams of the Inachus? “Having set fire to Thebes Polynices dedicates these shields to the gods?”’ (Trans. Kovacs)

Again, this is a clear allusion to contemporary practice: Jocasta’s idea is that Polynices will bring the spoils back to Argos, and there erect a victory monument.⁹⁹ This instance of victory epigram is written exactly as a real dedication

⁹⁷ See Pucci 2003 [1977]: 159–62. Discussion of *Tro.* 1188–91 in Segal 1993: 29–33; of *Alc.* 1000–5 in Segal 1993: 46–7. Segal sets up a fascinating contrast between the immobile statue in his bed, imagined by Admetus, and the open, public, and spontaneous commemoration offered twice by the chorus, at 445–55 (Alcestis’ fame will survive in the songs of poets at the Carneia in Sparta and in Athens), and in the last ode. More on the place of Orpheus’ writings in this play below.

⁹⁸ On *γράφω* construed with the external object of the thing affected see Mastronarde 1994, *ad loc.*

⁹⁹ As Steiner 1994: 76 stresses, the act of inscribing the spoils is presented as part of the ritual of dedication. The earliest public Athenian dedicatory epigram for a victory epigraphically preserved is CEG 179, celebrating the victory against the Boeotians and Chalcideans in 506 (cf. Hdt. 5. 77, with the epigram as well). Personal dedications begin earlier, at the very start of the sixth century. These compare better with Jocasta’s example, since the trophy would be erected by Polynices, an individual; but although they are dedications of tithes, they are not resulting from a victory in war. CEG 256, the dedication of Callimachus, the polemarch who died in Marathon, might be a good example of

after a victory would have been, but for the trimeters instead of the customary elegiac distichs; it is, however, undercut by the fact that the epigram is composed ('read', as it were) by the person who will lose most from the supposed victory, Jocasta, and imagined as erected by one of the other losers, Polynices. Here the irony is situated outside the text of the epigram, in the tragic text. In both this instance and that of Astyanax' funerary epigram, the genre is by now familiar enough to allow for some play with its conventions, and for an exploration of the limits of the format—and of its traditional ideology.

Another gesture towards epigraphical writing is in fr. 923 *inc. fab.* Kannicht. It is even stronger than those we have seen until now, since it refers not to a 'possible' and 'plausible' inscribed text, but to a 'real' one. Here, a character refuses to make a pledge, stating that the letters inscribed at Delphi (probably 'Pledge brings ruin') forbid him to do so (τὰ Πυθοὶ δ' οὐκ ἐᾷ με γράμματα).¹⁰⁰

Euripides is also the first to have brought 'books' onto the stage (or rather, references to what must be understood, in most instances, as books). In the fragmentary *Erechtheus*, for instance, the chorus tell of their desire to lay down their spear and, in their old age, the head crowned with garlands, sing their songs, after having hung their shields as dedications in the temple of Athena; 'and may I unfold the voice of the tablets in which the wise are celebrated' (δέλτων τ' ἀναπτύσσοιμι γῆ- | ρυν ᾧ σοφοὶ κλέονται, fr. 369 Kannicht). It is here difficult to know exactly what kind of books are meant and who are the wise referred to, and, in particular, whether the voice of the tablets is opposed or complementary to the songs mentioned above. A similar reference to oral tradition on the one hand and tablets of the Pierian Muses on the other is present in the *Iphigenia in Aulis* (798), where, as we shall see below, it resonates with other aspects of the play.

One other vague reference to poetic writings (with Muses lurking in the background) is in the *Hippolytus*: after she has heard of Phaedra's love, the nurse, looking for mythological precedent to comfort her mistress, states that

οἷοι μὲν οὖν γραφάς τε τῶν παλαιτέρων | ἔχουσιν αὐτοὶ τ' εἰσὶν ἐν μούσαις αἰεὶ | ἴσασι
μὲν Ζεὺς ὥς ποτ' ἠράσθη γάμων | Σεμέλης (Eur. *Hipp.* 451–4)

'Those who know the writings of the ancients and are themselves concerned with the Muses know that Zeus once fell in love with Semele . . .'

The nurse is hardly a character from which one would expect an advanced literacy (not so much because of her status, but because of the way her mentality is portrayed in the play), so the reference to writings rather than to oral tradition

dedication by an individual (and his family) in connection with a victory. Outside Attica, Corinth and Samos offer good instances of public victory dedications: respectively *CEG* 351 for the victory at Tanagra, dated to 458–457 BC, and also mentioned by Pausanias 5. 10. 4; and *CEG* 421, for a naval victory at Memphis, dated to 460–454 BC. Many more dedicatory epigrams commemorating victories are reported in literary sources. Pausanias' attempt to appropriate the common Greek dedication after the victory in the Persian war (Thuc. 1. 132. 2) is a good example of the way an individual might deal with the genre—and be punished for it.

¹⁰⁰ Collard and Cropp 2008, *ad loc.*, refer to Plato, *Charm.* 165A, the scholia to which cite a fragment of the comic poet Cratinus Iunior, fr. 12 K.–A.: A. 'Having for three times given security, I am dead'; B. 'Wasn't there in Delphi a writing, saying: "security, ruin"?' (οὕτω τότ' ἐν Δελφοῖσιν ἦν τὰ γράμματα | τὴν ἐγγύην ἄτην <λέγοντ';>); A. 'There was, but I have a friendly soul'.

appears surprising—to the point that the suggestion of understanding *γραφάς* as paintings has been entertained.¹⁰¹ This reference to writings (and even if they were paintings . . .) is all the more surprising since the exempla that follow are Zeus' love for Semele and Eos' love for Cephalos: well-known examples, one of a male god, the other one of a goddess, falling in love with a mortal (a choice reflecting the high opinion the nurse has of Phaedra, and the low opinion she has of the 'son of the Amazon' Hippolytus); there was no need of books to know about them—nor to know how badly both affairs ended.

If the nurse here stresses that it is cultivated people who know such stories, stories transmitted in books, it must be to bring home to Phaedra that this is an authoritative knowledge, the kind of knowledge common among Phaedra's equals. That Phaedra is acquainted with literacy the audience knows: for only a few verses before, in a very complex passage, Phaedra had first identified as the main cause for the ruin of mortals' life not lack of judgement (for we know what is best), but either laziness or giving priority to some pleasure. Among the latter she had listed *αἰδώς* (respect), adding that there are two kinds of it (or of pleasures as a whole), one not bad, the other a suffering for the house, and that it is not easy to distinguish between them. Phaedra's musings, however unclear in themselves, had ended with a very clear statement:

εἰ δ' ὁ καιρὸς ᾗν σαφής, | οὐκ ἂν δύο ᾗσθην ταῦτ' ἔχοντε γράμματα. (Eur. *Hipp.* 386–7)

'If what is appropriate were clear, there would not be two things designated by the same letters.'¹⁰²

This is a rather unnecessary display of literacy: for the issue here is that two slightly different concepts have the same name (or that the same quality can work in two ways, just as the good and the bad *ἔρις* at the opening of Hesiod's *Erga*)—and thus, having the same name, share the same letters; but the latter is a consequence of the former. Mentioning the letters, rather than the names, however, gives Phaedra the chance to objectify her reasoning, rendering it 'observable'. Moreover, literacy in the play is important. Phaedra will commit suicide, as had been her plan from the beginning, but she will also destroy Hippolytus through a lying letter. Pointing early on in the play to her acquaintance with literacy and to her habitual thinking in terms of it makes sense.¹⁰³ The Nurse's statement may be considered part of this endeavour too. Interestingly, the literacy that had marked Phaedra is, after her death, transposed by Theseus onto Hippolytus, whom he accuses of hypocrisy:

¹⁰¹ Barrett 1964, *ad loc.*; 'I have been tempted (with many editors) to take *γραφάς* as paintings'—but as he shows, this makes little sense in the context; so also Goff 1990: 97–8; Ford 2002: 154 and n. 90, and Stieber 2011: 222, with further references (but note *contra* Easterling 1985: 6 n. 26; Hall 2006: 112 and n. 50).

¹⁰² To the bibliography in Goff 1990: 96–7 (whose reading in this instance is not particularly compelling) add Kovacs 1980, who thinks it is pleasure that is here referred to; and esp. Halleran 1995, *ad loc.* Whether it is pleasure or *aidos* that are referred to here is of less import than the assertion of an inherent doubleness in some concepts; the open reference may be intended, as Phaedra is here expressing general considerations.

¹⁰³ Slightly different in its connotations, but also part of Phaedra's aristocratic portrayal, is Phaedra's dislike of enticing speeches (*καλοὶ λίαν λόγοι*, 487, and *passim*), a dislike which she expresses more than once and which she shares with Hippolytus; see Turato 1976; Goff 1990.

‘Now you may be proud, adopt a meatless diet and parade your food, and with Orpheus for your lord engage in Bacchic rites, honouring the vapours of many books! (Ὀρφέα τ’ ἄνακτ’ ἔχων | βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούς.) For you have been found out.’ (Eur. *Hipp.* 952–5)

Theseus is being heavily ironical,¹⁰⁴ and as the audience knows, he is wrong in his belief. It is even more ironical, from the audience’s point of view, that Theseus should consider bookishness a proof of corruption, while at the same time putting his entire trust in Phaedra’s letter.¹⁰⁵ It is noteworthy that in order to pour scorn on Hippolytus Theseus should turn to Orpheus and his books: the negative tone is evident, expressing the perception of a corrupting influence, or at any rate, of duplicity, of a screening of the truth. And although this is the contrary of what Phaedra initially had tried to achieve by using letters in her reasoning, Phaedra too finally turns to writing for her false accusation.¹⁰⁶

We have just seen books mentioned in connection with Orpheus’ teaching. ‘Orphic’ writings form a specific category, well represented in the relatively infrequent early references to books.¹⁰⁷ ‘Orphic’ books appear in the *Alcestis* (the earliest securely dated Euripidean play, produced in 438 BC), in a context in which various forms of wisdom are put side by side: the chorus claims to have ‘soared aloft with poetry and with high thought’ (διὰ μούσας καὶ μετάρσιος ἦξα) and to have touched on many discourses (πλείστον ἀψάμενος λόγων); however,

κρείσσον οὐδὲν Ἀνάγκας | ἡδρὸν οὐδέ τι φάρμακον | Θρήσσαις ἐν σανίσιν, τὰς Ὀρφεῖα
κατέγραψεν | γῆρυς, οὐδ’ ὅσα Φοῖβος Ἄ- | σκληπιάδαις ἔδωκε | φάρμακα πολυπόνοις |
ἀντιτεμῶν βροτοῖσιν. (Eur. *Alc.* 965–72)

‘I have found nothing stronger than Necessity, nor is there any cure for it in the Thracian tablets set down by the voice of Orpheus nor in all the simples which Phoebus harvested in aid of trouble-ridden mortals and gave to the sons of Asclepius.’
(Trans. Kovacs)

The comprehensive inventory of the chorus, covering poetry, astronomy, and philosophy, ends with two further sources of wisdom and remedies, connected between themselves:¹⁰⁸ the Orphic tablets, relying on a rather extraordinary type of writing (an orally dictated text!), and the Apollonian simples, relying, at least initially, on oral transmission. Both are put on the same footing, as equally useless against Necessity (which does not have to imply ‘useless’ *tout court*).

Finally, a fragment from the *Pleisthenes* preserves a reference to written collections of oracles, such as we know circulated already in the late sixth century:

¹⁰⁴ Against many critics, who see in Hippolytus someone inclined to mysticism, and take this reference to books seriously (e.g. Segal 1993, Steiner 1994: 205–6; Henrichs 2003b: 212–13 and 216, an important discussion of this passage; Scodel 2011), see Barrett 1964: 342–5; Linforth 1941: 56.

¹⁰⁵ Segal 1985: 219.

¹⁰⁶ The heavy emphasis on writing in the *Hippolytus* may explain why Artemis uses for song the language of ‘making’ (μουσσοποιὸς μέριμνα, 1428), when at the end of the play she announces future ritual performances and songs for Phaedra and Hippolytus, so that their memory will not die: cf. Ford 2002: 138.

¹⁰⁷ On Orpheus and writing see above, 66–8; Linforth 1941; Henrichs 2003b (*passim*, but esp. 212 n. 13 for the passage of *Alcestis*); Graf and Johnston 2007: 175–84; Scodel 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Apollo, the father of Asclepius, is in some versions father of Orpheus; both Orpheus and Asclepius had attempted to save mortals from death.

εἰσὶν γὰρ εἰς διφθέραι μελεγγραφεῖς | πολλῶν γέμουσαι Λοξίου γηρυμάτων.
(Eur. fr. 627 Kannicht)¹⁰⁹

‘There are, truly there are, parchments inscribed with song, laden with many utterances of Loxias.’

The transmitted μελεγγραφεῖς (‘inscribed with song’) is worth some attention: on a basic level, ‘song’ can be explained as referring to the hexametric verse in which oracular responses were couched; but on a deeper level, we have here a compressed version of the synaesthetic image of the writing that speaks, or rather sings, an image found, in a more complex articulation, in the *Hippolytus* (discussed below). The repeated, emphatic assertion of the existence of these texts may be the result of a context in which the authority of Apollo’s oracles was doubted; the writing would have served to reassert it. What further twists the plot might have brought is impossible to know.

Euripides may also have been the first tragedian to bring letters onto the stage.¹¹⁰ Remarkably, letters have the lion’s share among the various appearances that writing makes in Euripidean tragedy, in terms of both their frequency and their importance for the advancement or the resolution of the action.¹¹¹

The first letter to appear among the surviving oeuvre of Euripides is probably the deadliest, the one with which Phaedra accused Theseus’ son in the second *Hippolytus* (performed 428 BC). Another such letter, written this time by a man, but the result of the calumny of a spurned woman, had a central part in the plot of the *Stheneboea*, produced in the early 420s; that it failed to engineer the death of the intended victim was in no way imputable to epistolary error but simply to the extraordinary courage and strength of the hero, Bellerophon. A false letter, written by Odysseus, played an essential role in the peripeteia of the tragic *Palamedes* (probably produced c.415 BC), here too with deadly results. And letters, two of them positively marked (but one proving in the event useless, the other not reaching its intended addressee), a third one bearing a strong negative connotation, appeared in the two plays on Iphigenia, the *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (brought to the stage c.412 BC), and the *Iphigenia in Aulis* (first produced after Euripides’ death in 406 BC). These overall rather negative connotations do not apply as consistently to the other forms of writing; there is a clear difference in tragedy between epistolary writing and writing *tout court*. However, it is important

¹⁰⁹ The translation above is borrowed from Collard and Cropp (2008); see also their note *ad loc.*, with references to the many oracular collections known to have circulated at Athens in this period; and Kannicht *ad loc.* for full references, and a thoughtful assessment of Bergk’s correction μελεγγραφεῖς, ‘written in black ink’ (accepted in LSJ).

¹¹⁰ There were probably no letters, but only oral injunctions, in Sophocles’ *Andromeda*; the *Iobates* may be later than the Euripidean *Stheneboea*; a written message may have played a role in Sophocles *Poimenes*, and the play may have been performed c.460 (see above, 205–6 and n. 73); nothing can be said of the date (nor of the larger context) of Soph. fr. 784 Radt (see above, 200).

¹¹¹ It is worth noting here that terms implying writing are not evenly distributed in Euripides: ἐπιστολαί is attested eleven times, according to the following distribution: once each *Hipp.* *Andr.* *Hel. Bacch.* (in the three latter plays with the meaning of oral injunction, as once in *IT*); *IT* five times, *IA* twice. Out of eighty-nine overall occurrences of terms having to do with writing (list including only the terms formed on γράφω and δέλτος) fifteen come from nine different fragmentary plays; the remaining seventy-four are distributed as follows: 1 *Alc.*; 1 *Bacch.*; 1 *Her.*; 2 *Suppl.*; 2 *El.*; 2 *Hec.*; 3 *Tro.*; 3 *Phoen.*; 3 *Ion*; 13 *Hipp.*; 22 *IT*; 21 *IA*.

in this context not to forget that oral messages (and even face-to-face speech) are at times just as untruthful and destructive as written messages.¹¹² This means that at stake are mainly issues of communication, forms and typologies of successful and unsuccessful exchange, rather than a straight contrast between orality and writtenness.¹¹³

Let us take the plays in their chronological order. The first preserved letter of Euripidean drama is the one in the *Hippolytus*. The playwright envisaged this device for Phaedra's accusation only on a second occasion, when reworking the plot: for the *Hippolytus* we have is a radical rewriting of an earlier drama, in which, as seems most likely, Phaedra herself had first confronted Hippolytus with her love, and then, after being rejected, had falsely accused him to Theseus.¹¹⁴ Tradition imputes the failure of the play to its having been 'unseemly and worthy of condemnation': Phaedra had been portrayed in too blunt a way (Aristophanes in *Frogs* 1043 has Aeschylus speak of her and Stheneboea as whores, πόρναι). The task Euripides had then to face in his new version was to bring on stage a Phaedra who, although still falling in love with her stepson, would resist her love and behave in a more restrained way. The two main problems in the handling of the plot were constituted by the revelation of Phaedra's love to Hippolytus, and by the accusation of rape: Euripides solved the first by having the old nurse reveal to Hippolytus, against Phaedra's order, her mistress' love, and the second by having Phaedra commit suicide, leaving a letter.¹¹⁵ The suicide-letter played a crucial role. Phaedra could now die nobly, yet, thanks to the letter, the action could go on towards the expected resolution. The play was a success: it won Euripides one of his only four first prizes at the Dionysia.

The letter appears only in the second part of the play, unannounced, except for some cryptic words of Phaedra (715–30, where she says that she has found a stratagem, εὔρημα, to give her sons a good reputation and gain something out of the present misfortune);¹¹⁶ but its appearance had been prepared by the earlier references to γράμματα and to books discussed above. The first one to notice the

¹¹² See e.g. Lichas' initial message to Deianira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*; or Euripides' *Medea*.

¹¹³ Griffiths 2007 offers a fascinating account of letters (and others written documents) as attempts to control the course of future events; but the failure to distinguish between official, public writing and personal, private writing limits the import of her conclusions.

¹¹⁴ Discussion of the relationship between the three *Hippolytus* plays known (two by Euripides, one by Sophocles) in Barrett 1964: 10–45; Halleran 1995: 24–37. Both stress that this instance of rewriting is unique among Athenian tragedians; Halleran makes the point that the earlier version must have shaped audience's expectations (24); see also 25–7 for a concise summary of the evidence, and in particular 26 for the unlikelihood that a letter played a role already in the first *Hippolytus*. For the iconography see Linant de Bellefonds 1990: 404–64, and 1994: 356–9 (no traces of the story in monuments of the fifth century; earliest representations on South Italian vases, privileging the death of Hippolytus. A tablet given by the Nurse to Hippolytus, evidently a letter from Phaedra, appears in some mural paintings of the first century AD; the scene will enjoy success in late antiquity).

¹¹⁵ Thus the oral message of the Nurse and Phaedra's letter to Theseus are on the same plan: they both 'constitute a disastrously aggressive mode of telling women's secrets to men in power', Segal 1993: 90. As pointed out by Griffiths 2007: 282–3, the letter fails Phaedra as well: she may not have meant revenge on Hippolytus, and her reputation, her one concern, is ruined.

¹¹⁶ Note also the nurse's exclamation, when she realizes the catastrophic results of her good intentions: 670–1, 'What arts do we have, what speech, once we have faltered, that can undo the knot our speech has created?' (τίν' ἢ νῦν τέχνην ἔχομεν ἢ λόγον | σφαλεῖσαι κάθαρμα λύειν λόγους). The solution will be Phaedra's tablet. See also τέχνη at 680, said by the chorus of the failed ruse of the nurse.

object is Theseus. He sees the tablet (δέλτος, 856) hanging from Phaedra's hand, wonders whether it may want to indicate something new (θέλει τι σημῆναι νέον, 857), then assumes that his wife has written to him a message (ἐπιστολὰς | ἔγραψεν, 858–9) with a request concerning remarriage and her children; this is clearly the normal assumption. He opens the sealed wrapping, and looks at what the tablet 'wants to say' (φέρ' ἐξελίξας περιβολὰς σφραγισμάτων | ἴδω τί λέξαι δέλτος ἥδε μοι θέλει, 864–5).¹¹⁷ The action of Phaedra (writing a message) is thus neatly enclosed between two references to the desire of the tablet to speak: the tablet, first presented as hanging from Phaedra's hand, just as Phaedra had been hanging from a suspended noose in the description of her death first given by the nurse,¹¹⁸ from now onwards functions as a substitute for the writer.

In Theseus' first perception, the tablet, once he has silently read its message, 'screams, screams of grievous hurt' (βοᾷ βοᾷ δέλτος ἄλαστα, 877);¹¹⁹ the actor impersonating Theseus here switched to song. In the following verses Theseus expresses his suffering through a synaesthetic combination of sound and visualization, stating that 'such a song I have *seen*, wretched me, sounding forth through the writing' (οἶον οἶον εἶδον γραφαῖς μέλος | φθεγγόμενον τλάμων, 879–80).¹²⁰ The superposition of sound and image here conveys powerfully how much Theseus has been affected by the message, a message that he cannot hold any more within the gates of his mouth (so much has this become part of himself), and that he proceeds to publicize, uttering it in trimeters. Theseus' statement that Hippolytus has dared to touch with violence his marriage bed is all the audience will ever know of the content of the tablet. Theseus is by now set on avenging the deed: in what he sees as an utter confusion of every fundamental norm, Theseus is asking for clarity. From his father, Poseidon, he wants to know whether he has truly granted him *σαφεῖς ἀράς*, curses that can be relied upon (890). As for men, he dreams of a test of friends (τῶν φίλων τεκμήριον | σαφές, 925–6) that would allow him to know men's minds. His wish is that men would have two voices (*δισσάς τε φωνάς*), one just, the other as happens, so that the just voice would convict the other, making deceit impossible (928–31). This closely recalls both Phaedra's own musings on the two forms of *aidos* bearing the same name, thereby making it difficult to distinguish one's course, and Hippolytus' own wish that women would live with animals deprived of speech (*ἄφθογγα*, 646), so that they would not speak

¹¹⁷ The opening of the seal, and the connotations (ominous) of this specific type of seal are well analysed in Jenkins 2006: 82. Segal 1993: 97 stresses the growth in the quasi-magical power of the tablet: what were signs at v. 857 has become speech by v. 865. See also Steiner 1994: 38–9.

¹¹⁸ As suggested by Loraux 1979: 53–4 (see also Goff 1990: 38), the use of *ἡρτημένη* (857) here for the tablet echoes the use of the same participle for Phaedra (779).

¹¹⁹ The verb *βοᾷω* had twice been used earlier. In the scene in which the chorus and Phaedra, outside, hear Hippolytus, inside the house, upbraid the nurse, the chorus asks Phaedra *τίνα θροεῖς αὐδάν; τίνα βοᾷς λόγον;* (571); Phaedra answer, 'The son of the Amazon screams, Hippolytus' (*βοᾷ | Ἰππόλυτος*, 581–2). The noun *βοή* is also heavily employed. In this same passage, Segal 1993: 96 has pointed out the presence in the words of the chorus addressed to Phaedra, *ἔμολεν ἔμολε σοὶ βοά* (586), of an anadiplosis and a personification of speech that finds a parallel in the anadiplosis and personification of the tablet of v. 877.

¹²⁰ On the 'paradox of the silent tablet that shouts and the song that has its utterance in writing', a paradox corresponding to the deeper one of an absent Phaedra who can still produce such an effect, see Segal 1985: 219.

nor be addressed in response at all.¹²¹ In any one of these ways, with two distinct voices or with clearly separate (written) concepts, or even with no speech at all, things would be defined. This deep preoccupation with the difficulty of reaching clarity, a difficulty the three main characters of the play become aware of at different moments, links them together.

In the ensuing confrontation between Theseus and Hippolytus, two things, in Theseus' mind, damn Hippolytus: the death of Phaedra (945: 'convicted by the dead woman...'; 958: 'She is dead...and this convicts you most'; 972: her 'corpse, witness most reliable') and the tablet, invoked as the final argument against Hippolytus' pleas (1057–9). Against these two arguments, Hippolytus first proposes a rational defence (983–1035); then, as this proves useless, he appeals to time, which reveals everything (*μηνυτήν χρόνον*, 1051), and to the test of oaths, sworn testimony, and the words of seers (*οὐδ' ὄρκον οὐδὲ πίστιν οὐδὲ μάντεων | φήμας ἐλέγξας ἄκριτον ἐκβαλεῖς με γῆς*; 1055–6). Against this last appeal, Theseus pits the tablet:

ἡ δέλτος ἥδε κλήρον οὐ δεδεγμένη | κατηγορεῖ σου πιστά· τοὺς δ' ὑπὲρ κάρα | φοιτῶντας
ὄρνις πόλλ' ἐγὼ χαίρειν λέγω. (Eur. *Hipp.* 1057–9)

'This tablet, containing no divination by lot, accuses you convincingly; as for the birds that fly above my head, I wish them joy.'

Ominously, the king chooses to trust the writing, lightly dismissing oaths, testimony, and seers in a sentence whose conclusion recalls the words of Hippolytus against Cypris, the very words and the very attitude that had set the tragedy in motion ('As for your Cypris, I wish her joy!', *τὴν σὴν δὲ Κύπριν πόλλ' ἐγὼ χαίρειν λέγω*, 113). At the end of the play, Artemis will accuse Theseus of baseness, because he did not wait for testimony (*πίστιν*), the words of a prophet (*μάντεων ὅπα*), or time (*χρόνω μακρῷ*, 1320–3).

In this *agon*, the tablet, and whoever trusts it against the traditional oral proofs, is the villain. This impression is strengthened by the last two references to writing in the play. The first occurs in the speech of the messenger reporting Hippolytus' death: after having narrated the gruesome facts, the messenger states strongly that he would never be able to believe in Hippolytus' guilt,

οὐδ' εἰ γυναικῶν πᾶν κρεμασθείη γένος | καὶ τὴν ἐν Ἰδῇ γραμμάτων πλήσειε τις |
πεύκην. (1252–4)

'not even if the whole female sex should hang themselves, and fill with letters tablets made with all the pine wood of the Ida!'

In other words, the messenger transforms into a hyperbole the two main grounds on which Theseus' accusation had rested, and then makes no count of them. The

¹²¹ Hippolytus' statement that 'the tongue swore, the mind is still unsworn', *ἡ γλῶσσ' ὁμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος*, 612, also testifies to a split sense of things; as also, at the end of the confrontation with Theseus, his wish, dictated by despair, to go outside of himself to look at himself (to become a spectator): 'Would that I could stand apart and look at myself so that I might weep at the misfortunes I am suffering!', 1078–9. Stieber 2011: 257–62 offers an excellent discussion of the Euripidean mismatch between external appearance and internal reality, and shows that it is associated with images and metaphors linked to coinage (*χαρακτήρ* is the stamped image on a coin) and to the notion of folding/unfolding (of a written text, through the use of forms of verbs such as *ἀναπτύσσω*).

second and last reference to writing is in the words pronounced by Artemis when she appears to explain the events at the end of the play:

ἡ δ' εἰς ἔλεγχον μὴ πέσῃ φοβουμένη | ψευδεῖς γραφὰς ἔγραψε καὶ διώλεσεν | δόλοισι σὸν παῖδ', ἀλλ' ὁμῶς ἐπεισέ σε. (1310–11)

'Phaedra, fearing lest she be put to the proof, wrote a false letter and destroyed your son by guile, but even so persuaded you.' (Trans. Kovacs modified)

Here, the message is conveyed though semantics and rhetoric (the *figura etymologica* and alliteration: *mē pesēi/epeise, diōlesen/doloisi*). And this is final. Because of the death of Phaedra, writing in the play cannot be tested; already in Phaedra's own words, it had proved unreliable in distinguishing between positive and negative concepts; and the nurse, a rather negatively presented character, had appealed to its authority in a speech that was clearly in a bad cause.

Of the Euripidean *Stheneboea*, produced in the early 420s, only a few fragments are preserved, none of them mentioning any kind of writing. The only clues to the importance of a letter in this tragedy are the *argumentum*, which explicitly mentions a tablet (a δέλτος) given by Proetus to Bellerophon, carrying instructions for Iobates that were meant to cause the death of Bellerophon himself; and some relatively early Italiote vases (the earliest is dated to 420 BC) in which a man is depicted giving a letter to another man.¹²² The identification is assured by a Paestan hydria dated to c.350 BC, on which an old man, labelled Proetus, and dressed in what seems to be a theatrical costume, hands a letter to Bellerophon.¹²³ Since no representations of the scene earlier than 420 BC are known, although the story was already part of the *Iliad*, the conclusion that these depictions are influenced by Euripides' play seems reasonable. The reception of the play by the painters shows that they recognized in the letter an object with remarkable dramatic potential and significance. Because of the almost complete loss of the *Stheneboea*, it is impossible to know how exactly Euripides recreated the Homeric story: the name of the heroine changed from Anteia to Stheneboea, Proetus was presented as king of Tiryns rather than Argos, and Bellerophon arrived at the court of Proetus seeking purification for an involuntary murder committed at Corinth. Moreover, the plot was considerably expanded, so as to include the return of Bellerophon from Lycia and his revenge on the couple: death for Stheneboea, affliction for Proetus.¹²⁴ The *argumentum* and the testimony of the vase-paintings show, however, that the folded tablet with baneful signs still played a central role.

¹²² *Argumentum*: Kannicht iia; Collard and Cropp 2008, test. iia. Vases: Panathenaic amphora from Ruvo, now in Naples, Mus. Naz. 82283, LCS 44.128, Pistici Painter, c.420 BC, Kahil 1994 no. 1; Apulian bell-crater in Bonn, Akad. Kunstmus. 80, RVAp i, 14. 49, 420–400 BC, Kahil 1994 no. 2; Apulian stamnos of c.400 BC, Boston Museum of Fine Arts 1900.349, in front of a doorway that suggests theatrical inspiration, Kahil 1994 no. 3. Cf. Kannicht *iii; Taplin 2007: 201–3.

¹²³ Hydria Paestum Mus. Naz. 20202 signed by Asteas, dated to 350–330 BC, RVP 84, 134 pls. 5–56, cf. Kahil 1990 no. 5; also linked to the theatre because of the costume worn by the man (a Samnite dress) is another vase, a Campanian bell-crater from a private collection in Geneva, LCS Suppl. 2, 221. 281a and Suppl. 3, 198. 281a, group of Naples 3227, dated to c.330 BC, cf. Kahil 1990 no. 6. Here too, Proetus is giving the letter to Bellerophon; cf. Taplin 2007: 203.

¹²⁴ On the plot of the play, as far as it can be reconstructed, see the introduction in Collard and Cropp 2008: 121–5, with further bibliography.

Another play centred on the story of Bellerophon¹²⁵ attests to the significance of the story, the Sophoclean *Iobates*, possibly produced shortly after the *Stheneboea*.¹²⁵ The action of the *Iobates* took place in Lycia, and again a letter probably played a role: for practical reasons, because somehow Iobates must have been told that he should send Bellerophon¹²⁶ to his death, but also because of a number of Italiote vases in which Iobates (and not Proetus) is depicted in a central role (sitting on a throne), while Bellerophon¹²⁶ arrives on Pegasus, a letter in his hands. Evidently, the death-bearing letter struck the imagination of the Italiote painters, who saw in it a central moment in this well-known story. Yet bringing back any depiction (and even the explicitly theatrical ones) to a specific play is a risky endeavour. Moreover, all of this tells us something about how Bellerophon¹²⁶ story, and the role played by a letter in it, was perceived by Italiote painters, but it does not tell us much about the mainland Greeks' perceptions.

What is at any rate clear is that in the plays built around the story of Bellerophon¹²⁶, a letter is used to transmit an order to kill; in the first part of the story, the striking aspect of the affair resides not in the content of the letter, but in the fact that the intended victim is the bearer: only a letter, that is, a sealed piece of writing, can achieve this. In the second part (the arrival in Lycia), the same element takes a slightly different slant: the letter, once open, becomes a 'piece for the accusation', in the absence of the mandants (Proetus and Stheneboea). Unfortunately we do not know, not having the plays, whether the text of the letter was quoted and how exactly it was presented; there may have been an *agon* in which Bellerophon¹²⁶ opposed his words to the text of the letter.¹²⁷

We are on firmer ground with Euripides' *Palamedes*: it is almost certain that a letter played in it a role very similar to that of Phaedra's suicide note, the 'absent person' being this time its supposed sender Priam, who for obvious reasons could not be consulted. There was a further twist, however, for the letter in question, although seemingly coming from Priam, had been in fact written by Odysseus. Thus the lie involved not only the contents, but also the provenance of the letter. Here too, the written document, central to the tragic action, carried conviction against the words of Palamedes.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Radt, *ad loc.* makes no comments on the date, but cites Sellner's dissertation (Jena 1910) for the idea that the *Stheneboea* of Euripides stimulated Sophocles to write the *Iobates*. No argument survives, and the three very short fragments we possess do not allow us to reconstruct the plot in any details.

¹²⁶ See Berger-Doer 1990, nos. 1 and 3, both by the Darius Painter, both c.350 BC; 4, a loutrophoros in a private collection, Baltimore painter, c.320 BC; 6, bell-crater, LCS 415, 360, Iobates sitting on a diphros, in ornate (theatrical) costume, and reading the letter; behind him, his daughter Philonoe, who looks at Bellerophon¹²⁶; 7, lekythos from a private collection in Naples, LCS 302, 357, Laghetto Painter, c.340 BC: Iobates receives the letter. 8, lekythos in Naples, Mus. Naz. 147868, LCS 334, 781, Aversa painter, c.340 BC: Iobates with sceptre, oriental dress, and tiara reads the open diptych, held in front of him by Bellerophon¹²⁶.

¹²⁷ For the continued life of the 'Bellerophon¹²⁶ letter', with explicit reference to Bellerophon¹²⁶, see Plaut. *Bacch.* 810–11; Plin. *NH* 13. 27. 88, doubting the statement of Mucianus, consul in AD 52, 70, and 75, that he had seen in a temple in Lycia a letter on papyrus, a *charta*, written by Sarpedon while he was at Troy: for, as Pliny remarks, why would the others have used folding tablets such as those given to Bellerophon¹²⁶ in Homer, if *chartae* had been available. See further Monaco 1965.

¹²⁸ Discussion of the *Palamedes* above, 72–88.

Among the other surviving plays of Euripides two more feature letters, the *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and the *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In these plays, new aspects of epistolary writing are explored.

The *Iphigenia among the Taurians* has been defined an 'escape-play', a tragedy with a happy ending. Notwithstanding the initial focus on cruelty, human sacrifices, and remoteness from the Greek world, there is no overwhelming sense of anguish, but instead a slightly oneiric, unreal dimension.¹²⁹ And yet, even in a 'light' play, there are depths and complexity.¹³⁰ It has often been remarked that the play presents a very tight structure, with the various scenes leading one into the other in a remarkably coherent way. This strong structure serves as a foil for an exploration of the instability of reality, and more specifically, of the unstable nature of the various individuals' identity.¹³¹ This effect is achieved in various ways: through the temporary inversion of the previous pattern in a person's life (this is Iphigenia's case, for whom the letter is, in her new life, the tangible memory of her former identity);¹³² through a split between name and reality;¹³³ through the presentation of pairs and in general a high frequency of words for 'double';¹³⁴ through the implications in terms of credibility arising out of the rewriting of past stories;¹³⁵ and through metadramatic references to rituals, for these strengthen the impression of a gentle playing with tradition.

¹²⁹ Ferrari 1988: 5–27. Discussion of definitions in Wright 2005: 6–55. Cropp 2000: 31–43 stresses the element of tragic suffering, but also points to the changes in mood, the mock-combats at beginning and end, the misunderstandings, and the folktale elements. He also notes the metadramatic references to aetiologies (such as the Choes, 940–80), to tragic conventions, and to previous versions of the story (especially Aeschylus' *Oresteia*). All of the above combine to colour the perception of the story.

¹³⁰ Well summarized in Wright 2005: 226–337 ('Tragedy of ideas'), although his conclusion (that escape-tragedies are among Euripides' most pessimistic tragedies) seems to me excessive; see Ferrari 1988: 24.

¹³¹ Ferrari 1988: 5–34.

¹³² The dichotomies include the following. Iphigenia was sacrificed in Aulis / she presides over sacrifices among the Taurians (a contrast made explicit at 336–9 by a herdsman and by Iphigenia herself at 354–60.) She thought she would marry Achilles (25–7) / the name of the king of the Taurians, Thoas, mirrors the fact that he is famous for his swift feet (οὐ γῆς ἀνάσσει βαρβάροισι βάρβαρος | Θόας, δὲ ὠκὺν πόδα τιθεῖ ἴσον πτεροῖς | ἐς τοῦνομ' ἦλθε τόδε ποδωκεῖας χάριν, 31–3), just as the Homeric Achilles was swift of feet, πόδας ὠκύς. She is utterly disconnected from the real world (cf. 220–30, and esp. 220: ἄγαμος ἄτεκνος ἄπολις ἄφιλος), yet she has moments of clear-sightedness (380–91). When Orestes regrets that his sister will not be able to perform the funerary rites over his body (631), Iphigenia pities him for his vain wish: 'she dwells far off from this barbarian land'; but she declares herself ready to accomplish that office instead, describing in detail what will happen to Orestes' body, down to the pouring of honey on his cinders (635).

¹³³ See Ferrari 1988: 19–20, who highlights the opposition *onoma*–*soma* (a variant of the sophistic antithesis *onoma*–*pragma*), explicit at 504; reappearing, in modified shape, at 765: τὸ σῶμα σώσας τοὺς λόγους σώσεις ἐμοί; Wright 2005: 293–4 (and below). The game of mirrors had begun early: Orestes sees Erinyes in the cattle and slaughters them (296–300, with Wright 2005: 287 for the double layer of illusion). See also the substitution for Orestes' name of a 'real' one, Δυστυχής, 500 (but compare 697); Orestes lives οὐδαμού καὶ πανταχοῦ, 568.

¹³⁴ δῖπτυχοι νεανῖαι is used three times for Orestes and Pylades (242, 474, 1289), δίδυμοι once (456), δισσοί also once (264). Cf. also the ἀμφίλογα δίδυμα (655), double arguments of the chorus, uncertain whether to cry for the stranger that will leave or for the one who will be sacrificed. Wright 2005: 285–8 stresses the high number of terms relating to perception and appearance in the *IT* (forms of *dokeo*, 'seem', appear twenty-five times).

¹³⁵ See Wright 2005: 283–5.

The letter is central to the plot, as the instrument that engineers the recognition of Orestes and Iphigenia: it occupies centre stage, both in the references made to it by the actors and as an object brought physically on the stage and handed round, from v. 582, when Iphigenia first mentions it, to v. 793, when Orestes discards it as unimportant. Paradoxically this letter, viewed by Iphigenia as the instrument for communicating at distance with her kin in Argos, will actually make possible direct, face-to-face communication (above Pylades' head, as it were) with Orestes, who has been captured with his friend by the Taurians.

Iphigenia first mentions a letter when she learns the Argive origin of the prisoners. She can spare one of them, and so proposes to Orestes (who has refused to give his name) to save his life if he is willing to bring news of her to Argos:

‘If I spared your life, would you be willing go to Argos and bring news of me to my friends there, and deliver a tablet, which a captive wrote having taken pity on me, since he did not think that mine was the murderous hand, but that he was dying under the law, considering these rites of the goddess legitimate. For I had no one who might bear a message back to Argos and, on being saved, would convey my letter to one of my friends. But you—for as it seems, you are not hostile to me, and know Mycenae and those I love—save yourself there, and have this reward, not a shameful one: safety for the sake of a light piece of writing (κούφων . . . γραμμάτων).’¹³⁶

Before the dramatic action began, Iphigenia had thus asked someone to write a letter for her, even though she did not have anyone who could deliver her message: a letter singularly devoid of purpose, more a token than anything else. Yet the story of how it was written gives pause: the letter is written in blood, as it were. This is all the more striking as there was no need to introduce a former victim as the writer: Iphigenia could have given Pylades a letter written by herself; nothing in the play requires her to be illiterate. This is thus in a pregnant sense a letter ‘for’ Iphigenia, and it remains such until Iphigenia finds a carrier. Finally, at least as remarkable is the way in which the letter is defined in the sentence that closes Iphigenia’s entreaty: ‘light’, or also ‘vain’, letters, *κούφα γράμματα*. Of course a *deltos* is not heavy, and the *grammata* written on it, in their ‘incorporeal’ shape, are even lighter; they will prove vain as well, in the course of the play (the near homophony of *κούφος* to *κωφός*, ‘deaf, mute, dumb’, said of writing and speech, might have played a role in the choice of the term).

Once it has been decided that Pylades and not Orestes will carry the letter to Argos, Iphigenia enters the temple to fetch her tablet. As she comes back with it, a new fear has crossed her mind: that the person who will bear the letter to Argos may not think much more about her request once he has left the land of the Taurians (731–3). A letter is as safe as its carrier’s honesty: an oath is necessary. In the mirror game of the play, Orestes then asks that she too takes an oath, that she will let the messenger leave safely the land of the Taurians: a clearly absurd

¹³⁶ IT 582–94: θέλοις ἄν, εἰ σώσαιμί σ', ἀγγεῖλαί τί μοι | πρὸς Ἄργος ἔλθων τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἐκεῖ φίλοις, | δέλτον τ' ἐνεγκεῖν, ἣν τις οἰκτίρας ἐμὲ | 585 ἔγραψεν αἰχμάλωτος, οὐχὶ τὴν ἐμὴν | φονέα νομίζων χεῖρα, τοῦ νόμου δ' ὕπο | θήσκειν, τὰ τῆς θεοῦ τάδε δίκαι' ἡγούμενος; | οὐδένα γὰρ εἶχον ὅστις ἀγγεῖλαι μολῶν | ἐς Ἄργος αἰθῆς, τὰς <τ> ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς | 590 πέμψειε σωθεὶς τὸν ἐμὸν φίλωνα τινί. | σὺ δ'—εἰ γάρ, ὡς ἔοικας, οὐχὶ δυσμενὴς | καὶ τὰς Μυκίνας οἶσθα χοῦς ἐγὼ φιλῶ— | σώθητι κείσε, μισθὸν οὐκ αἰσχροὺν λαβών, *κούφων* ἑκατι *γραμμάτων* σωτηρίαν. On the extremely sophisticated use of δέλτος, γράμματα, and ἐπιστολή, depending on what Iphigenia wants to stress, see above, 17; Kyriakou 2006: 200.

request, for as Iphigenia mildly remarks, 'This is only fair: how could he deliver the message otherwise?' (740). At any rate: both Pylades and Iphigenia swear never to reach home if they break their oaths, but a further worry this time crosses Pylades' mind:

ἐξαίρετόν μοι δὸς τόδ', ἣν τι ναῦς πάθῃ, | χὴ δέλτος ἐν κλύδωνι χρημάτων μέτα | ἀφανῆς
γένηται, σῶμα δ' ἐκσώσω μόνον, | τὸν ὄρκον εἶναι τόνδε μηκέτ' ἔμπεδον. (IT 755–8)

'Give me this exception: if something happens to the ship and the tablet disappears with the goods in the waves, and I rescue only my own body, let this oath not be binding.'

Letters and goods may disappear by accident, even while the messenger survives. This is where Iphigenia discovers the advantages of double transmission, and adopts the procedure that was common in Greek official communications: she will tell the messenger the content of the document (and announces this with marked redundancy):

ἀλλ' οἷσθ' ὃ δράσω· πολλὰ γὰρ πολλῶν κυρεῖ. | τὰνόντα κἀγγεγραμμέν' ἐν δέλτου
πτυχαῖς | λόγῳ φράσω σοι πάντ' ἀπαγγεῖλαι φίλοις. | ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ γάρ· ἣν μὲν ἐκσώσης
γραφὴν, | αὐτὴ φράσει σιγῶσα τἀγγεγραμμένα: | ἣν δ' ἐν θαλάσῃ γράμματ' ἀφανισθῇ
τάδε, | τὸ σῶμα σώσας τοὺς λόγους σώσεις ἐμοί. (IT 759–65)

'But I know what I will do; for many attempts hit many targets. All that is contained and written in the folds of the tablet I will tell you in words, to report to my loved ones. That way lies safety: if you preserve the writing, it will itself speak silently its message; but if the document is lost in the sea, by saving your body you will save for me my message.'

Through being written, words acquire a *σῶμα*, a solidity and a corporeality linked to the tablet, a stable sign;¹³⁷ but this body/tablet can be lost (or preserved); a human body may survive (or be sacrificed: in all this, Orestes is due to be killed, his death being the counterpart to the safe delivery of the tablet); a letter may silently communicate, even as a living being (Orestes) may decline to state his name.¹³⁸ To ensure that her message arrives, Iphigenia proceeds to 'read' the letter, with Pylades as the main addressee, and Orestes 'eavesdropping' on it. But she is interrupted immediately after her first words 'Tell Orestes, son of Agamemnon . . .' (*ἀγγελλ' Ὀρέστη, παιδὶ τἀγαμέμνονος . . .*, 769), in the first of a series of interventions by Pylades and then by Orestes, who slowly begin to realize who she is.¹³⁹

After having given the name of the addressee, following epistolary procedure, Iphigenia states the name of the sender in riddling terms that again point to her strange situation (living but dead): 'She who was sacrificed in Aulis sends you this,

¹³⁷ Wright 2005: 336.

¹³⁸ See further on the word-plays in this passage Cropp 2000, *ad loc.* and Wright 2005: 294, both stressing the pair *man/chremata* (consequence of the earlier mention of the loss of everything, and of a possible word-play *chremata/grammata*); Cropp, however, interprets this in the legalistic direction, Wright underlines the unsettling effect of this passage and in general the complexity of the relationship between reality and illusion.

¹³⁹ I follow here the line order (very much in accordance with the light character of the scene) proposed by Jackson in 1955 and accepted by Kovacs in his Loeb edition, inserting after 769 the vv. 780–781–777. Diggle and Cropp 2000 retain the traditional order, as does Kyriakou 2006: 259.

Iphigenia, alive, although no longer alive for people there' (ἡ 'ν Αὐλίδι σφαγεῖσ' ἐπιστέλλει τάδε | ζῶσ' Ἰφιγένεια, τοῖς ἐκεῖ δ' οὐ ζῶσ' ἔτι, 770–1). An indeterminacy of another type applies to the next sentence of the letter, which she adds, after one more interruption: 'Bring me to Argos, o brother, before I/you die' (Κόμισαί μ' ἐς Ἀργος, ὦ σύναιμε, πρὶν θανεῖν, 774): the infinitive *θανεῖν* leaves it open whether what is meant is her own death in foreign lands (that must have been the meaning she had in mind) or Orestes'. Of course Orestes has to be alive if he is to save her, but the play has been building up until this moment towards his death as a sacrificial victim at the hands of Iphigenia.¹⁴⁰ The letter closes with an *ἀρά*, a malediction: 'or I shall be a curse upon your house' (778) that reinforces the effect of realism conveyed by the entire letter (the names of both the addressee in the dative and the sender as well as the verb *ἐπιστέλλει* combine to make this a very real-sounding letter; although it is unlikely that the *formula valedicendi* at the end of a letter was a stable feature of fifth-century letters, it is still striking to find here an inverted one). After some further details to the messenger that make clear how much she is already, in her mind, in Argos (the letter does indeed here function as one half of a conversation: the simple fact of repeating it makes Iphigenia feel that she is already there), Iphigenia marks the end of her 'reading' and of her instructions with a final: 'Those are my commands, this is what is written in the tablets' (αἶδ' ἐπιστολαί, | τάδ' ἐστὶ τὰν δέλτοισιν ἐγγεγραμμένα, 786–7). Upon this Pylades delivers himself directly of his oath by passing the tablet straight to Orestes:

ἰδοῦ, φέρω σοι δέλτον ἀποδιδωμί τε, | Ὅρέστα, τῇσδε σῆς κασιγνήτης πάρα.
(Eur. *IT* 791–2)

'See, I bring you a tablet and give it to you, Orestes, from your sister here.'

But something interesting happens at this point: Orestes accepts the letter, as one accepts a presage (δέχομαι, 793);¹⁴¹ but he then immediately discards it, choosing action (he tries to embrace Iphigenia) over both folds of letters and words (παρεῖς δέ γραμμάτων διαπτυχὰς | τὴν ἡδονὴν πρῶτ' οὐ λόγοις αἰρήσομαι, 793–4). Iphigenia hesitates, however: having kept this letter for so long, she now wants to retain it and the image she had formed of her liberation, and cannot accept the new situation without a test. Orestes must give a proof of his identity (τεκμήριον, 808), and he does so, dividing the proofs in two groups. First, what he knows based on what he had heard from Electra (ἀκοή, 811). This part comprises recalling the dispute between Atreus and Thyestes, a story that Iphigenia wove 'in a fine-textured web'—in other words, a story registered in another kind of writing;¹⁴² the bridal bath she received before leaving for Aulis; and a lock of

¹⁴⁰ Cropp 2000 translates 'I' and does not comment; Kovacs translates 'you'; Kyriakou 2006: 260 notices, and states that 'the subject is *με*'. Clearly the ambiguity here is intended. (In the same way, at 771 *τοῖς ἐκεῖ*, 'the people there', is also sometimes used euphemistically for the dead: Wright 2005: 268).

¹⁴¹ We have to imagine the corresponding gesturing of the two actors; the deictic *τῇσδε* makes it easy. For *δέχομαι* in the sense of 'to accept an omen', see Kyriakou 2006: 264.

¹⁴² The very rare *εὐπηγος* at 814, in the question of Orestes (*ταῦτ' οἶν ὑφήνασ' οἶσθ' ἐν εὐπήγοις ὑφαίς*); is striking: it appears here; at *IT* 312, for the finely-woven peplos with which Pylades covers Orestes after his attack of folly; and at the very end of the play, in the prophecy of Athena, at 1465: Iphigenia will establish a cult in Halai, she will be buried there, and the finely-wove peploi of women who have died in childbirth will be dedicated on her tomb (*οὐδ' καὶ τεθάψῃ καθθανούσα, καὶ πέπλων | ἀγαλμά*

hair that Iphigenia sent back to her mother as a memorial for the tomb, instead of her body (μνημεῖά γ' ἀντὶ σώματος τοῦμοῦ, 821). Iphigenia is here defined through her weaving/writing, and through absences, the missed wedding ceremony and the empty tomb. Orestes moves now to the second type of proof, those that he himself saw (ἃ δ' εἶδον αὐτός, τὰδε φράσω τεκμήρια, 822). This provides the final, decisive proof, derived from something that Orestes saw in Iphigenia's own bedroom: the spear of Pelops with which he conquered Hippodamia. Only now is Iphigenia convinced. The procedure may have been closely modelled on the Athenian judicial system.¹⁴³ But in the way these proofs are presented we can also, with Segal, see something of Euripides' self-awareness: Euripides' tragic version of the story of the Atreidae finds its place between the new technology of writing, represented by the letter, the old and traditional forms of transmitting the story, symbolized by the weaving, and, I would add, the immediacy of the direct, personal visual experience, as experienced specifically in drama.¹⁴⁴

Once the letter has served its purpose, it is forgotten, discarded as useless, just as no more proofs will be needed to convince Iphigenia. At least for the modern reader, one question lingers: Iphigenia repeated the content of the letter—but she cannot have known what was actually written in it, as she had had to ask someone else to write it for her; Orestes discarded the letter. For all the emphasis on this document, we shall never know what exactly the prisoner who was going to be sacrificed wrote; these are indeed *κούφα γράμματα*, 'light letters'. In this sense, it may not be an accident that Iphigenia proudly presents the letter, when she first brings it physically onto the stage, with: 'Here, foreigners, is the tablet of many doors and many folds' (δέλτου μὲν αἶδε πολύθυροι διαπτυχαί, | ξένοι, πάρεισιν, 727–8). The emphatic, elaborate presentation is understandable: as long as she remains among the Taurians, this letter is Iphigenia's link with her Argive royal past. *πολύθυρος* is used only here for a tablet; it can be understood as modelled on *δίθυρος*, a term that could be used of the two leaves of a tablet. Yet the redundancy of both 'folds' and 'many leaves' to characterize this tablet, added to the unique use of *πολύθυρος* for a letter, cannot but surprise.¹⁴⁵ Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1407^b34) quoted it as an instance of the lofty style. It is quite possible that these words have been put in Iphigenia's mouth to stress the contrast between the girl (illiterate: she had to ask someone to write for her) and this instrument, which she sees as almost all-powerful. Because of her illiteracy, this is truly an object of many doors (*πολύθυρος*).¹⁴⁶ But the letter can be said to have many doors also in another,

σοι θήσουσιν εὐπήνους ὑφάς). In all of Greek literature *εὐπήνους* is attested again only in a citation of Eur. *IT* 312 by [Luc.] *Amores* 47 (but Lucian's *codices* actually have *εὐπήκτους ὑφάς*) and in Aelian. *NA* 7. 57. *Πηνίτις* is attested as an epithet of Athena, in Aelian (the same passage), and in *Anth. Pal.* 6. 289 (Leonidas, fittingly a dedication of a *kerkis*). Could this be another Euripidean aetiological allusion?

¹⁴³ Ferrari 1988: 21; cf. the legalistic phrasing of other passages, as with *ἐξάιρετος* at 755, with Cropp 2000, *ad loc.* Good, detailed discussion of the recognition in Wright 2005: 305–7.

¹⁴⁴ Segal 1985: 222–3. The lack of overt reference to the theatre in Greek tragedy, as opposed to comedy, is discussed in Hall 2006: 105–11; among the earlier bibliography, note Taplin 1986.

¹⁴⁵ See Cropp 2000 *ad loc.*; Kyriakou 2006: 248–9; Jenkins 2006: 96–7.

¹⁴⁶ Kyriakou 2006 has an interesting discussion of the shape of the tablet, but fails to see that her final dismissive remark might reflect a point Euripides wanted to make ('There is no reason to assume with Bruhn and others that Iphigenia's letter actually had many leaves. Apart from the fact that it

metatheatrical sense. Firstly, *πολύθυρος* applies very well to the possibilities open for reformulations of the mythical legacy, and to Euripides' awareness of them: in this play Euripides is giving new shape to traditional material (note the aetiologies at the end of the play: local cults also undergo a similar reshaping). Secondly, as Jenkins suggests, this tablet of many doors will give to all characters a way out of the land of the Taurians.¹⁴⁷ But the tablet of many doors also suggests, just at the beginning of the recognition scene, the always present possibility of alternative outcomes: the unread letter contains in its folds many paths, and the three main characters, Iphigenia, Pylades, and Orestes, turn around it; but the letter, for all of the insistence on writing in this part of the play, is out of reach or fundamentally unstable. If this play (as a number of others) shows that 'language is fundamentally inadequate', the inadequacy involves spoken words, but also written ones.¹⁴⁸

Such an interpretation of the role of the letter is supported by the conclusion of the play. Athena, appearing *ex machina*, is needed to save the situation; the goddess first addresses Thoas and orders him to desist from his pursuit. Then, she addresses Orestes and Iphigenia, who, however, are no longer on the scene: as the Taurian messenger has just reported, they are all on board the Greek ship, but, because of the waves, cannot leave the harbour. Athena thus sends *epistolai* to Orestes:

μαθὼν δ', Ὅρέστα, τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς— | κλύεις γὰρ αὐδὴν καίπερ οὐ παρὼν
θεᾶς— . . . (IT 1446–7)

'Having learnt, Orestes, my orders—for even not being present you hear the voice of the goddess— . . .'

One wonders whether the use of *ἐπιστολάς* here is not one of these Euripidean features that made Aristophanes qualify him as 'frigid': a letter (or rather, the paraphrase of the contents of a letter, containing Iphigenia's cry for help, addressed to someone reputedly far away, but actually within hearing range) has played a role earlier in the drama; the term is now used by Athena for her own very different, authoritative, and direct (oral) message, sent, however, to someone who is truly at some distance, Orestes.

In this instance too, the letter struck the imagination of vase-painters: a scene representing Iphigenia handing the letter to Pylades is painted on an Attic calyx-crater dated to c.390–380;¹⁴⁹ six more Apulian vases, as well as a Campanian amphora, are similarly decorated. The fact that these images do not closely follow all the details of the Euripidean play is all the more interesting, because it shows that in the story as it was perceived and transmitted the letter kept playing an

makes nonsense of Aristotle's example [not really], many tablets for such a short letter would be the equivalent of a modern letter written or printed on a single page and followed by several blank pages', 249). There might have been some dramatic play with the object Iphigenia brought on the scene.

¹⁴⁷ Jenkins 2006: 96–7. Note that at the very beginning of the play, Iphigenia had sent Orestes libations (something more in her range), because, as a consequence of her dream, she feared that he might have died (*ὥς φθιμένῳ τὰδε σοι πέμπω*, 171). The parallels between the two sendings might have been enhanced through action on the stage.

¹⁴⁸ Wright 2005: 307 (the citation); 307–16 for the more general point.

¹⁴⁹ Crater Ferrara Mus. Naz. T 1145, ARV² 1440, 1, Iphigenia Painter, cf. Kahil 1990, no. 19. At 717, Kahil notes that this is the only Attic vase to present the story of Iphigenia among the Taurians: it is thus all the more significant that exactly this moment was chosen.

important role, somehow characterizing Iphigenia (as we have seen, its practical use is minimal).¹⁵⁰ Aristotle too praised the first part of the recognition scene (*Poet.* 1455^a16–19) as the best of the many through which recognition can be achieved, because it is a logical consequence of the situation: Iphigenia would have naturally wanted to send a letter (he liked the second part of the recognition, Orestes' proofs, much less, and catalogues it among the contrived ones, *πεποιημένα*, *Poet.* 1454^b30–5).¹⁵¹ While this is important evidence for how letter writing was seen in the fourth century, we should not unquestioningly impose on fifth-century perceptions the assumption that sending a letter is the natural thing to do.

Letters figure prominently also in the other *Iphigenia* play. We cannot know how the original *Iphigenia in Aulis* began.¹⁵² In the version we have, a letter opens the action. At the beginning, Agamemnon enters holding a tablet that he wants to entrust to an old man. We learn more about the tablet and the difficulties it is causing through the words of the old man, who pointing to it (*δέλτον τε γράφεις* | *τήνδ'*, *IA* 35–6) wonders at Agamemnon's activities: he is writing by the light of a lamp, erases what he has written (*ταῦτὰ πάλιν γράμματα συγχεῖς*, *IA* 37), seals the tablet and breaks its seal, throws the tablet on the ground weeping. . . .¹⁵³ Clearly this unusual writing activity foreshadows a problem, and we learn of the problem in the following *rhesis* by Agamemnon: the army cannot sail because of unfavourable winds, and Calchas has prophesied that only the sacrifice of Iphigenia will allow the Greeks to sail. The first reaction of Agamemnon was (he recounts) to order that Talthybius, the herald, proclaim the dismissal of the army, 'with a high-pitched (or straight) proclamation' (*ὀρθίῳ κηρύγματι*, 94). This is the honourable, 'straight', open reaction. However, persuaded by Menelaus, Agamemnon has instead written a letter, a folded tablet, to his wife, asking her to send Iphigenia to marry Achilles. The wedding is, of course, a lie: and Agamemnon's choice of words, when he reveals that he has deposited the writing in the *folds* of a tablet (*κὰν δέλτον πτυχαῖς γράψας* | *ἔπεμψα*, *IA* 98–9), may be significant. There is certainly a gesture towards the *γράμματα λύγρ*a of Iliadic memory, written on a folded tablet (*πίνακι πτυκτῶ*);¹⁵⁴ the statement may also be intended to contrast with the directness of the herald's hypothetical proclamation.

Having explained the reason for his sorrow, Agamemnon goes back to the *deltos* he has at hand, in which he has written his revised decision (*μεταγράφω*, 108), and entrusts it to the old man.¹⁵⁵ But, before letting the messenger go and bring

¹⁵⁰ Kahil 1990, no. 10–24, and 25, dated to the period between 350 and 320 BC. For a further vase not in LIMC see Taplin 2007: 152 and n. 99. The number acquires consistency when viewed against the total number of vases depicting some part of the story.

¹⁵¹ Discussion in Wright 2005: 298. Sketch of the reception of the play in antiquity in Cropp 2000: 62–4.

¹⁵² For the textual problems that beset the *Iphigenia in Aulis* see Kovacs 2003. Jenkins 2006: 87 n. 13, Foley 1985: 102–5, and Knox 1972 accept the text as it stands. Good discussion of the play in Foley 1985: 65–102.

¹⁵³ For the idea that the confused way in which Agamemnon here proceeds foreshadows the confusion this letter will cause see Jenkins 2006: 88–9.

¹⁵⁴ *Pinax* is not attested in Euripides; the letter mentioned first (chronologically second) had been defined by the old man simply as a *deltos*, the object of Agamemnon's writing (*δέλτον τε γράψας*, 35).

¹⁵⁵ *μεταγράφω* (and with it vv. 106–10) has been rejected by Page among others with the argument that this verb occurs only here in poetry; it is defended by Knox 1972: 287 as 'a good fifth century word:

his orders to Argos (ἀλλ' εἶα χώρει τάσδ' ἐπιστολὰς λαβὼν | πρὸς Ἄργος, 111–12), he proposes to tell 'in words' to the old man, and thus to the audience, 'what this tablet hides in its folds, everything written therein (ἃ δὲ κέκευθε δέλτος ἐν πτυχαῖς, | λόγῳ φράσω σοι πάντα τὰγγεγραμμένα, 112–13)'. The procedure is exactly the same as that followed in the *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, but here the reading is not really necessary, from a theatrical point of view, since the audience by now already knows the gist of the letter.¹⁵⁶ The reaction of the old man,

λέγε καὶ σήμαιν', ἵνα καὶ γλώσση | σύντονα τοῖς σοῖς γράμμασιν αὐδῶ (IA 117–18)

'Tell me, explain, so that I may express with my tongue things in tune with your writing',

goes some way towards explaining this decision; moreover, this corresponds to the procedure commonly followed in interstate official communications.¹⁵⁷ But the letter is read also because of the letter scene in the earlier *Iphigenia* play. Clearly this is an intertextual allusion to that other 'reading' scene, as shown by the remarkable closeness between IA 112–13 and IT 760–1, both incidentally marked by extreme redundancy, even as they introduce a redundant message (note also the mimetic redundancy in the words of the old man at 117–18, above). That letter had brought about recognition, and ultimately salvation, for both Iphigenia and Orestes; this letter would have brought salvation to Iphigenia, if read to the right person, namely the addressee, Clytaemestra. But it is read instead to the old man; it will not be delivered—and Iphigenia will be sacrificed.

Agamemnon's message to Clytaemestra is the only letter ever quoted in extant drama (in the *IT*, Iphigenia had actually redictated her letter):

πέμπω σοι πρὸς ταῖς πρόσθεν | δέλτους, ᾧ Λήδας ἔρνος, | μὴ στέλλειν τὰν σὰν ἱνὴν πρὸς | τὰν κολπώδη πτέρυνγ' Εὐβοίας | Ἀῶλιν ἀκλύσταν. | εἰς ἄλλας ὥρας γὰρ δὴ | παιδὸς δαίσομεν ὑμεναίους. (Eur. IA 115–23)

'I send you a letter in addition to my earlier one, daughter of Leda: do not send your daughter to Aulis with its bays, protected from waves and jutting out toward Euboea. We will make the wedding feast for our daughter's marriage another time.' (Trans. Kovacs)

The contrast with Iphigenia's own letter is remarkable: there, plain language and iambic trimeters; here, very elevated language and anapaests, a rather surprising choice for the form of communication supposedly closest to everyday speech.¹⁵⁸

There may be an intended contrast between the type of language a young person such as Iphigenia had used, and that of a king such as Agamemnon;¹⁵⁹ but in the

Thucydides uses it of the same circumstances and in the same sense—a change in the text of a letter (1.132.5), and it is used by Xenophon of changing the text of treaties and by Demosthenes of changing the text of juridical verdicts.' See also Jenkins 2006: 90–1 ('*Metagrapho* is the most important word of the passage', 90). At any rate, even if *metagrapho* were non-Euripidean (the passage is considered spurious by both Diggle and Kovacs), it inserts itself perfectly into a series of terms prefixed with *meta-* to indicate changes of mind (343, 346, 388, 500, 502; cf. Ferrari 1988: 34).

¹⁵⁶ One of the main problems of introducing letters onto the stage is that their content must somehow be made known to the audience; reading them is one way, cf. Rosenmeyer 2001: 69–70.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Knox 1972: 285–6; Jenkins 2006: 91–2.

¹⁵⁸ Fraenkel 1955; cf. Knox 1972: 286.

¹⁵⁹ Note that the contrast name/reality (here *onoma/ergon*), so present in the *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, is brought out here by Agamemnon just after this letter, in answer to the question of the old

context of this play, the letter also underlines the overt contrast (and deep parallelism) between Agamemnon's use of a lofty tone in a letter, which fails to convey any sense of urgency, and his inability to deal with important decisions in face-to-face encounters. The feverish nightly writing of Agamemnon is his attempt at rewriting history, at being a different person—with the arrival of Iphigenia and Clytaemestra at the camp, Agamemnon's attempt will be ended.¹⁶⁰

One more element characterizes this letter: the fact that ostensibly it is sealed. The seal is first mentioned by Agamemnon as the element that will give credibility to the old man's errand (note that in the words of the old man oral and written messages are fused into one, predominantly oral, message: he speaks of his own credibility 'when talking', as a messenger bearing an oral message would, using the same verb, *φράζω*, that Agamemnon had used for his recitation of the letter at v. 113):

(Old man): *πιστὸς δὲ φράσας τάδε πῶς ἔσομαι, | λέγε, παιδὶ σέθεν τῇ σῇ τ' ἀλόχῳ* (A.):
σφραγίδα φύλασ' ἣν ἐπὶ δέλτῳ | τήνδε κομίζεις. (IA 153–6)

Old Man: 'But tell me, how shall I look trustworthy to your child and wife, when announcing this?' A.: 'Keep unbroken the seal, which you carry on this letter.'

This letter, however, will not be delivered; its privacy will be violated, its seal broken. During the song of the chorus, Menelaus (off stage) intercepts the letter before it can reach the intended recipient, opens it, reads its contents, and confronts Agamemnon with it. Thus, this letter signally fails in its purpose.

To compound Agamemnon's plight, the first letter too in a sense fails: it reaches the intended addressee, Clytaemestra; but, as Agamemnon will soon learn, the queen does not follow the request precisely, and instead of simply sending Iphigenia, she accompanies her daughter. Thus, of the two letters sent by Agamemnon, the deceitful one he sends first reaches its destination and attains its goal, but does not command respect, or only in part, from its addressee; the truthful one does not reach its destination, and renders his own situation dangerous, since his change of mind is objectified in a text whose authorship he cannot deny. The inverted parallelism between these two letters was certainly intended: the messages could, in both instances, have been conveyed orally. Letters appear in this play as bad instruments for communication; if they are so marked, it is because in this play letters function to emphasize Agamemnon's inability to engage in open, face-to-face communication.

This comes close to being stated explicitly in the course of the confrontation between Agamemnon and Menelaus. The old man, having lost his fight over the letter (303–13), alerts Agamemnon, calling him out of the tent with a sentence showing clearly, by the use of *ἐπιστολαί* rather than *δέλτος* for the object stolen, that it is Agamemnon's orders that are endangered. But the first words of Menelaus (who is holding in his hands the tablet throughout the scene) to Agamemnon are 'look at me'. Verbs of 'seeing', 'opening', and 'showing' are repeatedly stressed in the following verses:

man 'How will you deal with Achilles?': *ὄνομα, οὐκ ἔργον, παρέχων Ἀχιλλεύς | οὐκ οἶδε γάμους*, 128–9 ('It is his name, not himself that Achilles is lending; he does not know of the marriage').

¹⁶⁰ Foley 1985: 93–5 convincingly proposes to see here also an allusion to Euripides' own rewriting of the myth.

Με. βλέψον εἰς ἡμᾶς, ἔν' ἀρχὰς τῶν λόγων ταύτας λάβω. | Αγ. μὴν πρέσας οὐκ ἀνακαλύψω βλέφαρον, Ἀτρεΰς γεγώς; | Με. τήνδ' ὀρᾷς δέλτον, κακίστων γραμμάτων ὑπηρέτις; | Αγ. εἰσορώ· καὶ πρῶτα ταύτην σὼν ἀπάλλαξον χερῶν. | Με. οὐ, πρὶν ἂν δείξω γε Δαναοῖς πᾶσι τὰγγεγραμμένα. | Αγ. ἦ γὰρ οἶσθ' ἂ μὴ σε καιρὸς εἰδέναι, σήμεντρ' ἀνείς; | Με. ὥστε σ' ἀλγῦναί γ', ἀνοίξας ἂ σὺ κάκ' ἡργάσω λάθρα. (IA 320–6)

Me. 'Look at me. I want this as the starting point of my words.' A. 'Shall I, a son of Atreus, be unable to raise my glance from fear?' Me. 'Do you see this tablet, the servant of the vilest message?' A. 'I see it. And first you must let it out of your grasp.' Me. 'No, until I show its content to all the Greeks.' A. 'What? Do you know what you should not know, having broken the seal?' Me. 'Yes, to your great chagrin, I have exposed the mischief you were secretly doing.' (Trans. Kovacs modified)

Menelaus contrasts his own straight, direct way of dealing with facts with Agamemnon's stealthy use of a letter, a 'servant of the vilest writing'. Agamemnon protests his right to manage his own house (τὸν ἐμὸν οἰκεῖν οἶκον οὐκ ἔασομαι; 331), that is, he continues to consider his letter as a personal document, as if his decision did not have consequences for the entire army. But this is not accepted by Menelaus. In the following *rhesis*, the latter proceeds to expose what he sees as two damning changes in his brother's behaviour, changes that parallel the move from open speech to letter writing. According to Menelaus, at the time when he was hoping to be chosen to lead the expedition of the Greeks against Troy Agamemnon kept his doors unlocked for everyone (καὶ θύρας ἔχων ἀκλήστους τῷ θέλοντι δημοτῶν, 340) and was ready to enter in conversation even with those that did not want it, trying through this behaviour to gain advancement from the multitude (τοῖς τρόποις ζητῶν πρίασθαι τὸ φιλότιμον ἐκ μέσου, 342). As soon as he won the office, he changed his manners (καῖτ', ἐπεὶ κατέσχευ ἀρχάς, μεταβαλὼν ἄλλους τρόπους, 343) and became 'hard to approach and scarce within doors' (δυσπρόσιτος ἔσω τε κλήθρων σπάνιος, 345). It is difficult not to compare this with other instances of tyrannical behaviour in which the use of letters for communication goes together with the imposition of a distance and the refusal of communication on the same level. According to Thucydides Pausanias made himself difficult to approach, behaving so arrogantly that no one was able to come near him (δυσπρόσοδόν τε αὐτὸν παρέιχε... ὥστε μηδένα δύνασθαι προσιέναι, Thuc. 1. 130. 2); in that same context Thucydides tells how Pausanias turned to letter writing. The behaviour of Deioeces may also be compared, who was open before, but imposed communication through writing once he became king of the Medes (Hdt. 1. 96 ff.). Much later Plutarch will state the same of Nicias (δυσπρόσοδος ἦν καὶ δυσέντευκτος... κατακεκλειμένος, Plut. Nic. 5. 1–2), who too, fearing difficulties with the assembly, chose to innovate by sending a letter.¹⁶¹

Menelaus is not presented in the play as the kind of character in whom one would want to put excessive trust (just like Agamemnon, he is unable to face reality, and he likewise undergoes a radical change of mind, something fairly rare in Greek tragedy);¹⁶² yet his description of the 'other Agamemnon' is very compelling. He reinforces his point about the change in Agamemnon's behaviour

¹⁶¹ Cf. Stockert 1992: 295–6, with further examples of this specific change in behaviour; and above, 88–9 for Deioeces, 140 and 142–6 for Pausanias and Nicias. The emphasis on open and closed doors here (IA 340, 345) may actually have been intended to parallel the folded and sealed faces of the tablet.

¹⁶² See Ferrari 1988; Foley 1985: 96; Knox 1966.

by pointing out a second change, with a formulation that lends weight to my hypothesis of a connection between difficulty of access and epistolary writing. Menelaus states that upon learning from Calchas that the sacrifice of Iphigenia would appease Artemis and allow the Greeks to sail, Agamemnon freely decided to write to his wife that she should send his daughter on the false premise of a wedding to Achilles (360–2); ‘but then, after all, having turned round you have been caught changing to other signs’ (*καὶ θ’ ὑποστρέψας λέληψαι μεταβαλὼν ἄλλας γραφάς*, 363). The two verses, 343 and 363, are clearly worded so as to enhance the parallelism: the same adverb is used to connect them to what precedes, *καὶ θ’*; the same verb, in the same tense, *μεταβαλὼν*, is in both cases construed with accusative plurals: *ἄλλους τρόπους*, *ἄλλας γραφάς*.¹⁶³

Agamemnon will resist the attack, and will restate (in ‘brief, clear, and easy to understand’ words, 400) his refusal to sacrifice his daughter; but the arrival of Clytaemestra and Iphigenia (reality overtaking writing) will seal the girl’s fate. After admitting the failure of his tentative attempt to send his wife away (away ‘from my eyes’, *ἐξ ὀμμάτων δάμαρτ’ ἀποστείλαι*, 743), Agamemnon exits the scene. At this point, the chorus sings a visionary song: the Achaeans will go to Troy, where Cassandra—‘as I am told’ (*ὡς ἀκούω*, 757–8)—tosses her blonde hair; Ares, trying to fetch Helen, will sack the city utterly . . . Their song (vv. 751–800) closes with the statement:

διὰ σέ, τὰν κύκνου δολιχαύχενος γόνον, | εἰ δὴ φάτις ἔτυμος ὥς | σ’ ἔτεκεν ὄρνιθι
 παμμένω <Λήδα>, | Διὸς σὺ γ’ ἡλλάχθη δέμας, εἴτ’ | ἐν δέλτοις Πιερίσιν | μῦθοι τὰδ’ ἐς
 ἀνθρώπους | ἤνεγκαν παρὰ καιρὸν ἄλλως. (IA 794–800, ed. Kovacs)

‘And all on account of you, child of the long-necked swan, if the tale is true that <Leda> bore you to a winged bird, Zeus in altered shape—or it may be that in the tablets of the Pierian Muses these tales are born to men falsely and to no purpose.’

(Trans. Kovacs)

Here the chorus wonders about the reliability of the traditional accounts of Helen’s birth, and of the Trojan war (still to happen!) more generally. Fascinatingly, when debating over the truth and falsehood of this traditional story, the chorus locates the first in unattributed oral tales (*φάτις*) and the second in written poetic accounts (accounts of the Muses, themselves associated with oral transmission and not with books!) Of course, both will be either true or false; but the hint at the (re)writings of poets on the tablets of the Muses sounds like a striking self-reference to Euripides’ own rewriting of the story in this play, as well as a reference to Agamemnon’s epistolary attempts to cancel his writing through a new writing.¹⁶⁴

The stasimon is followed by Achilles’ encounter with Clytaemestra, a scene full of misunderstandings that will be solved by the old man: the second message thus arrives, but too late, and in an oral version. The two letters are mentioned in this context for the last time (*δέλτον ὡχόμην φέρων σοι πρὸς τὰ πρὶν γεγραμμένα*, ‘I had gone to bring you a letter concerning the earlier writing’, 891). But they are

¹⁶³ See Stockert 1992: 295, and esp. 301. Note that Menelaus’ reference to Calchas’ prophecy at v. 358 is also introduced by *καὶ θ’*: the adverb marks the turning points of Agamemnon’s behaviour.

¹⁶⁴ Zeitlin 1994: 170–1 suggests that this passage may echo in another key the epistolary theme of the play; she proceeds to connect this with the importance taken by visualization.

reported *in absentia*, since the first one is in Argos and the second one has been intercepted by Menelaus. And yet, without letter and without seal, the old man has no difficulty in convincing Clytaemestra of the truth of what he is saying.

What emerges from this survey of writing in Euripidean drama is the disappearance of private (metaphorical) writing, such as the inscription on the tablets of the mind. This is replaced by a much greater attention to public, 'documentary' writing, designed to establish a public and common memory; to books, seen as markers of authority, but also potentially as carriers of corrupting influences; and to epistolary communication, often—but not always—seen as problematic.

5.1.4. The Alphabet on Stage

In the last quarter of the fifth century, the nuts and bolts of writing in the form of specific alphabetic letters make their appearance on the stage. We shall examine next an ensemble of fragments, having in common the fact that they all come from two passages of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, and that in them alphabetic letters were brought on the stage in a messenger's report, and also visually, as images to be decoded.

In the tenth book of his *Deipnosophistae* Athenaeus preserves a sequence of extracts from plays that may have had in fact rather different characteristics. He found them collected in Clearchus' book *On Riddles* (composed c.300 BC). The overall picture may thus be skewed by the fact that these fragments had all come from a collection of riddles, which also explains their relative homogeneity. The first text is a comedy by Callias, the 'so-called' (as Larensis, the *deipnosophist* speaking, says) *Γραμματική θεωρία* (*Spectacle of Letters*)—elsewhere, Athenaeus uses *Γραμματική τραγωιδία*, *Lettered Tragedy*: in both cases, this may have been the name given by Clearchus to the part of Callias' play he was using in his book.¹⁶⁵ Callias' piece was (most likely) a comedy inspired by the discussions surrounding the reform of the alphabet that took place in Athens in 403 BC under the archonship of Euclides. In his prologue, Callias had introduced the letter names, in their alphabetical sequence, in iambic metre (. . . <ᾗλφα>, βῆτα, γάμμα, δέλτα, θεοῦ γὰρ εἰ, | ζῆτ', ἦτα, θῆτ', ἰῶτα, κάππα, λάβδα, μῦ, | νῦ, ξεῖ, τὸ οὐ, πεί, ῥῶ, τὸ σίγμα, ταῦ, <τὸ> ὕ, | παρὸν φεῖ χεῖ τε τῷ ψεῖ εἰς τὸ ὦ); there was also a chorus of women, which sang (possibly to a melody from Euripides' *Medea*) a lyric passage, consisting of couples of alphabetic letters (*stoicheia*: β, α, βα, β, ε, βε, and so on).¹⁶⁶ In the course of the play, Callias (or rather the poets he brought on the stage)

¹⁶⁵ Callias' work is first mentioned in Athen. 7. 276 A; it is again mentioned in 10.453 C–454 A, where passages of the play (see Callias test. *7 K.–A.) are actually quoted or summarized. Smith's interpretation (2003) of the relation between the play by Callias, the *Medea*, and the *Oedipus Rex* supersedes all former discussions; Svenbro 1993: 183–6, Rosen 1999, Ruijgh 2001, and Slater 2002 should, however, also be mentioned here. Gagné 2013 is an important contribution but appeared too late to be taken into account in what follows.

¹⁶⁶ Athen. 10. 453 D–E; cf. Athen. 7. 276 A. Chorus of women (not necessarily the letters of the alphabet): Smith 2003: 325 n. 37 (against the interpretation of Svenbro 1993: 184, Wise 1998: 15, Ruijgh 2001: 262, Slater 2002: 126). The notion that Callias' play provided the model for Euripides' *Medea* is clearly a misunderstanding, to be explained along the lines proposed by Smith 2003. For school exercises in the form of syllabaries closely resembling the sequence in Callias' prologue cf. IG II² 2784; see IG II² 2783 for a compendium of tachygraphy (?).

further analysed in terms of incorporation of letter names some iconic tragedies; the example given in Athenaeus comes for instance from Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Callias' play thus may have been mainly a comic review of earlier plays, to be imagined along the lines of Aristophanes' *Frogs*; but there was a strong focus on pronunciation, as is shown by a further quote concerning an exchange between an actor and the chorus, focused on the correct enunciation of the seven vowels (Athen. 10. 453 F–454 A). On the whole, at issue were the sounds of the letters, not their shape—and thus not writing: Smith has convincingly shown that these passages were not meant as riddles, and that their riddling aspect resulted from the transcription of a text made for oral delivery (the theatre script, which did not present any riddles) into a text written for reading, Clearchus' book.¹⁶⁷ A further fragment, however, presents a riddle of a different type, based on the shape of letters and not on sounds: a woman claims to be pregnant with a baby whose name corresponds to that of two letters whose shape she proceeds to describe: a tall one with two arms reclining, departing from the middle; and a round letter with two small feet, in other words, probably Ψ and Ω .¹⁶⁸ Whatever its exact meaning, this riddle shows that some letters were described in detail, and that the visual, graphic description of the alphabet thus had a role in the play.

Next, Athenaeus lists Euripides' *Theseus*. In this play, produced sometime before 422 BC, an illiterate herdsman in what must have been a messenger-scene described the shape of the letters composing the name of Theseus.¹⁶⁹ Athenaeus cites from the play a long series of thirteen iambic trimeters; the first two allow us to know how the speaker characterized himself: 'I do not know the letters, but I shall tell the shapes and manifest signs' ($\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \pi\acute{\epsilon}\phi\upsilon\kappa\alpha\ \gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\upsilon\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\ \iota\delta\rho\iota\varsigma,\ |\ \mu\omicron\rho\phi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \delta\epsilon\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\xi\omega\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \sigma\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}\ \tau\epsilon\kappa\mu\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\alpha$); the rest was given over to a description of the individual shape of the various letters, mostly in terms of abstract lines ($\gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\acute{\alpha}\iota$), straight or crooked, although comparison with a curling lock of hair is used for the Σ . The context makes it impossible to know whether the name seen by the herdsman was inscribed on a ship (the prow, or the sail), or on some personal object (such as a sword or a shield), maybe marking a dedication; thus, the context and the function of this 'reading' remain obscure.¹⁷⁰ It is also unclear how the illiterate herdsman himself was presented: his description made it possible for at least part of the audience to recognize the name; yet it is unlikely that in a tragedy (and moreover one concerned with Theseus), this scene was meant to

¹⁶⁷ Smith 2003.

¹⁶⁸ Athen. 10. 454 A. This riddle is not discussed by Smith 2003; for suggestions as to its meaning, see Svenbro 1993: 185, who imagines that the graphism of a long letter and a rounded open one was played out obscenely on the stage (but it is not certain that the chorus was indeed formed by alphabetical letters); Slater 2002: 127 plumps for an abbreviation of $\psi\omega\lambda\acute{\eta}$, 'penis with retracted foreskin', and imagines that the pregnant woman who is speaking would have 'flashed' a huge penis from under her dress; Rosen 1999: 156 reports Dalechamp's (1583) interpretation, that two letters mean $\psi\omega\alpha$, 'foetidus ventris crepitus'—an interpretation that fits comedy exceedingly well. L. Holford-Strevens (*per litteras*) makes the excellent point that Ψ and Ω are two of the letters absent from the pre-Euclidean alphabet; and that if we are indeed to think of $\psi\omega\lambda\acute{\eta}$, it is interesting that Λ had acquired a new shape and H a new function.

¹⁶⁹ Eur. fr. 382 Kannicht = Athen. 10. 454 B–C. The *terminus ante* for the date is given by a notice of a scholion to Aristophanes' *Wasps*, 313, asserting that these verses parodied Euripides' *Theseus*. Cf. Jouan-Van Looy 2000: 146–47; but the play could have been produced anytime between 455 and 422 BC.

¹⁷⁰ For the first hypothesis, Rosenmeyer 2001: 345; Turner 1975: 9. Slater 2002: 119–21 considers this unlikely, and canvasses the other two possibilities. None imposes itself.

make city-dwellers have fun at the expense of humbler characters living in the country.¹⁷¹ There is another possibility, besides that of fun at the expense of the illiterate or that of a serious messenger-report by a humble but dignified character, and that is to think of satyrs. But it is not certain whether the *Theseus* was a satyr play or a tragedy; the latter seems more likely.¹⁷²

The next instance quoted in Athenaeus is Agathon's *Telephus* (or *Tlepolemus*), probably a satyric play, in which, in a game of emulation with the previous piece, an illiterate again described with a shorter series of six trimeters the letters composing the name of Theseus; this time, the letters were not described in abstract terms, but were compared to objects of similar shape, such as the Scythian bow to describe the Σ, or the straight rod (*kanon*), mentioned twice to illustrate the Η and the Υ.¹⁷³ This is the only fragment we have of the *Telephus*, and Athenaeus does not give any other information; it is thus not possible to say what the social status of the person describing the letters was, nor in which connection Theseus was named, nor how important a place this 'reading/recognition scene' occupied in the plot. The recognition of Theseus' name is also the focus of the next passage in Athenaeus, eight verses of the playwright Theodectas of Phaselis, active in the first half of the fourth century. The speaking character was, once again, an illiterate rustic (*agroikos*);¹⁷⁴ and it is very clear that Theodectas is indebted to both his predecessors. The title of the play is not known, but it is likely that this one too was a satyr play.¹⁷⁵

Callias' comedy and these three plays must have followed one another in Clearchus' book. Callias' comedy may have been a sort of literary review; what went on in the other plays may be easier to understand if we assume that they were satyr plays (with the exception of Euripides' *Theseus*, at the beginning of the series), because of the satyrs' usefulness for exploring culture. Puzzle-solving is almost a topos in a satyr play, and the instances just discussed fit well with it. Satyrs tend to have an interesting relationship with everyday life: in their curiosity and youthful enthusiasm, they pose afresh questions that men might have forgotten to ask. The questioning of satyrs involves the relationship between reality, image, and writing (so, for instance, in Aeschylus' *Theoroi*), and it might have just as well involved the shape and functioning of alphabetic characters.¹⁷⁶ However, this is not a necessary assumption; what must be admitted is an intertextual play between the three passages: otherwise, not only is it difficult to explain why Theseus' name is the only one chosen for the 'recognition', but the recognition itself becomes a rather boring affair once the spectators already know who the

¹⁷¹ Harris 1989: 109 n. 194; Slater 2002: 118. Torrance 2010: 245–6 attempts an interpretation in terms of elitism and social tensions linked to literacy.

¹⁷² Sutton 1978 considers it probably satyric; Jouan and van Looy 2000: 151–2 prefer to see in it a tragedy, as also, decidedly, Kannicht, *TrGF ad l.*, and Slater 2002: 117–22; Cipolla 2003 hesitates, but tends towards tragedy, also because of the lack of resolutions.

¹⁷³ 39 F 4 Snell = Athen. 10. 454 D. Satyric: Cipolla 2003: 300, because of the unusually high number of resolutions when compared to the other fragments of Agathon (and when compared to Euripides' *Theseus*, the 'model'), and because of the theme; see Cipolla 2003: 299–302 for a commentary. Slater 2002: 122–4 considers it a tragic fragment, and gives a good overall discussion, with some interesting hypotheses as to the content of the play.

¹⁷⁴ 72 F 6 Snell = Athen. 10. 454 DE. See on the play Slater 2002: 124–5; Cipolla 2003: 311–12.

¹⁷⁵ So Cipolla 2003: 311–12; the verses again present a very high number of resolutions.

¹⁷⁶ Excellent discussion in Voelke 2001: 273–99.

subject is. If recognition had been the main point, different names would have been chosen. With the assumption of intertextual play, the focus shifts from the 'recognition' process itself to the clever variants in the description.¹⁷⁷ Conversely, if no other names are mentioned in Athenaeus, probably this means that there were no other instances of this kind of 'lettered description' of a hero's name in the course of a messenger-report.

The hypothesis that some or all the plays by Euripides, Agathon, and Theodectas mentioned in connection with the recognition of Theseus' name may have been satyric is supported by the example with which Larensius (the Deipnosophist speaking) rounds up this part of his discussion: Sophocles' satyric play *Amphiar- aus*. According to Larensius, Sophocles in it 'attempted to do the same', i.e., presumably described the word 'Theseus', by bringing on stage someone who danced the letters (τὰ γράμματα παράγων ὀρχούμενον).¹⁷⁸ The passage of Athenaeus does not allow us to understand how such a riddle could have been verbalized – it may have been simply mentioned in Clearchus' book. What is however evident is that here the letters were not described but performed.

Earlier in the tenth book, but already in the context of his discussion of riddles, Athenaeus had mentioned two more works that brought writing onstage in yet a different way: Antiphanes' comedy *Sappho* and the satyr play *Iris* by the tragediographer Achaëus. At issue in the *Sappho* was not the shape of the letters but their nature and place, as we shall see later. From the *Iris* Athenaeus quoted a passage describing how 'a litharge flask full of unguent was suspended alongside the Spartan inscribed tablet, on a double peg' (τὸν Σπαρτιάτην γραπτὸν ἐν διπλῷ ξύλῳ | κύρβιν, 20 F 19 Snell), chosen in order to instantiate Achaëus' 'obscure and enigmatic' mode of writing. Athenaeus explains that what Achaëus meant here was a white leather strap, on which a silvery oil flask hung; but to describe it, he employed an expression twice removed from the real thing, using 'Spartan inscribed tablet' for the Spartan *skytale*, and the latter metonymically for the leather strip carrying the message that was wrapped around it.¹⁷⁹ Alphabetic letters were thus not brought onstage in the *Iris*, nor did this play necessarily include any riddles.¹⁸⁰ But the preserved fragment is definitely interesting in its association of *Iris* (the messenger of the gods), Athens (implied by the use of the word *kyrbis*, a particular type of triangular support, on which Solon's laws famously had been inscribed;

¹⁷⁷ Slater 2002: 125 suggests that the name of 'Theseus' may have been chosen for these recognitions because 'tragedy taught the audience, sometimes quite literally', and 'an ability to recognize his [Theseus'] name as a label on monuments might have been desirable' (125). Drama taught, it is true, but I find it difficult to believe that a playwright would go to such lengths for something not directly functional to his plot. The first name recognition (the Euripidean one probably) must have been necessary for some reason, and the others, whether they happened in satyr play or tragedy, simply built on the previous one. See Turner 1975: 9 for a sensible evaluation of the meaning of these scenes for literacy; and Torrance 2010: 246–8 for some good observations on the move from abstract lines and geometric shapes (in Euripides) to material objects of everyday life (in Agathon) to a combination of the two (in Theodectas).

¹⁷⁸ Sophocles F 121 = Athen. 10. 454F.

¹⁷⁹ 20 F 19 Snell = Athen. 10. 451CD. There still remains the question of the double-faced wood or peg, which is explained by Cipolla 2003: 206 in reference to the fact that two sticks were used for the coding of the message. See Cipolla 2003: 204–8.

¹⁸⁰ Although the entire passage is said to come from Clearchus, the silent insertion of details or even entire discussions from another source is certainly possible.

comedy makes frequent reference to real or metaphorical *kyrbeis*), and Sparta, a polis that, if it was famous for its *skytale*, the messenger's stick, was also well-known for its refusal to put its laws in writing.¹⁸¹ Iris in Attic iconography is often represented as assaulted by satyrs; the *skytale* may have been a (rather peculiar) attribute of the goddess in her role of messenger, and possibly the satyrs, having got hold of it as a result of an assault, comically misused it.¹⁸²

The second group of texts bringing letters onstage occurs in Athenaeus' eleventh book, in the context of a discussion of the 'lettered cup' (γραμματικὸν ἔκπωμα, i.e. a cup bearing inscribed letters). Here, the source is not Clearchus (or at any rate: we are not told so), and the focus not anymore on riddles. Athenaeus puts together examples from comedy (an unknown play of Alexis, the *Neottis* of Eubulus), from a satyr play (Achaëus' *Omphale*), and from prose commentaries (in particular, a piece of information deriving probably from Asclepiades of Myrlea and concerning a cup said to have belonged to Nestor, conserved at Cuma and inscribed with letters—possibly Homeric verses).¹⁸³ Achaëus' *Omphale* is the oldest text in this series. In the passage of the *Omphale*, individual letters inscribed on a cup beckon the satyr, who tries to piece together their meaning:

ὁ δὲ σκύφος με τοῦ θεοῦ καλεῖ πάλαι | τὸ γράμμα φαίνων δέλτ', ἰῶτα καὶ τρίτον | οὐδ, νῦ
τό τ' ὃ πάρεστι, κοῦκ ἀπουσίαν | ἐκ τοῦπέκεινα σὰν τό τ' οὐ κηρύσσειον
(Achaëus, fr. 33 Snell).

'The skyphos of the god has been calling me for a long time, showing its inscription; *delta*, *iota*, and in the third place, *o*; *nu* and *u* are present; and in what follows, it is not an absence that *san* and *ou* proclaim.'

We may imagine the satyr turning the cup around in his hands, reading out the letters one by one, until the final two 'proclaim' the name of the god and owner of the cup to those, onstage and in the audience, able to put together the separate letters/sounds into a meaningful whole. Was the point here the necessity of connecting individual letters into a whole to produce sense, or rather the connection between naming (vocally or in writing) and essence, reality, epiphany ('performative' writing)?¹⁸⁴ At any rate, the kind of object described here was fairly common: silver cups with gilt letters are well attested, as are ceramic ones with painted dedications to Dionysus, Hygieia, and Zeus Soter, to whom at the beginning of the symposium a libation was owed.¹⁸⁵ Here, the name on the cup is

¹⁸¹ Plut. *Lyc.* 13. 1–3 states that Lycurgus prohibited the writing of laws. Apart from two inscriptions, there is no epigraphical evidence for the use of written laws in Sparta before the second century BC. Cf. Boring 1979: 27–31.

¹⁸² The little that is known of the *Iris* is discussed by Schloemann and Krumeich 1999, with references to satyric assaults on Iris at 526–7, and to the role of the *skytale* with its secret messages at 529.

¹⁸³ Alexis: Athen. 11. 466 DE, and also 481 F; Eubulus: Athen. 11. 467 BC; Achaëus: Athen. 11. 466 EF, cf. 498 D; cup of Cuma, Athen. 11. 466 E, and also 489 C.

¹⁸⁴ For Svenbro (1993: 177–8) the text plays on the contrast between the 'backward', uneducated satyr, who reads aloud, and the speaking letters, which imply the practice of silent reading (by then shared by most of the literate members of the audience). For a summary of the very little that is known about the *Omphale* see Pechstein and Krumeich 1999; Cipolla 2003.

¹⁸⁵ On comic cups see Arnott 1996: 761–2 (list of inscribed cups, of epigraphical references, and of literary references to inscribed cups; note the one in Plaut. *Rudens* 478, inscribed with the name of Venus); Wilkins 2000: 231–41; at 235, Wilkins points out that comedy shares with satyr play the interest in the cottabus; the same, it would seem, applies to lettered cups. Arnott 1996: 760 stresses the imitation of tragic rhythm in Alexis' passage dealing with the lettered cup; of course this does not imply in and of itself a connection with satyr drama.

in the genitive: the cup is the property of Dionysus. Again, we cannot know what this meant in the plot; the audience may have enjoyed recognizing the name in advance of the satyr—although the satyr already knows that this is the cup of the god: we have here a ‘literate’ satyr, if still hesitant.¹⁸⁶

In discussing the ‘lettered cup’, Athenaeus also cites two comic fragments. As these fragments are likely to have been influenced by the earlier satyr plays, they are best discussed here. In Alexis’ fragment (fr. 272 K.–A.), a character describes to someone else a cup, old and small, crushed in the handles, and with letters inscribed all around it (ἔχων κύκλῳ τε γράμματα)– ‘eleven letters in gold’; to this the other replies, ‘dedicating the object to Zeus Soter’. Clearly the cup was a treasured antique, a silver cup with gilt letters, meant to prepare a recognition scene;¹⁸⁷ but it was not ‘read from’, nor were the shapes of the letters described.

The same applies to Eubulus’ fragment, the only one surviving of his play *Neottis*.¹⁸⁸ Here, a speaker seems to recognize the object: ‘I have always hated more than anything a lettered cup. And yet how like this one is to the little *phiale* my son took with him when he disappeared . . .’ to which the second character (a courtesan) answers philosophically: ‘So many things look alike’.¹⁸⁹ A recognition probably followed, but a staged deciphering scene seems unlikely. Some reading may, however, have occurred in an earlier play of Aristophanes, for in a fragment preserved in the *Etymologicum magnum* (fr. 634 K.–A.), a character shows (?) to another character an inscribed cup: γίνωσκε τὸν ἄλεισόν τε καὶ τὰ γράμματα, ‘recognize the cup and the letters’. How this functioned in each instance we can only guess, but it is clear that there was much intertextual play going on; it is also clear, however, that long scenes of letter recognition, especially when the letters were inscribed on cups, were not central to the plots.¹⁹⁰

5.2. THEATRICAL LETTERS: COMEDY

Although, as we have seen earlier, fifth-century comedy may have alluded to official letters in connection with Cleon, and although writing in general figures

¹⁸⁶ Svenbro 1988: 183–4; Voelke 2001: 208–9, 279.

¹⁸⁷ See on the fragment (possibly from the play *Hippeus*, the *Horseman*) Arnott 1996: 760–2.

¹⁸⁸ On the plot of the *Neottis* and on its similarities with Antiphanes’ and Anaxilas’ *Neottis* plays see Hunter 1983: 159–60.

¹⁸⁹ μισῶ κάκιστον γραμματικὸν ἔκπωμ’ ἀεί· | ἀτὰρ ὡς ὅμοιον οὐμὸς υἱὸς ᾤχετο | ἔχων φιάλιον τῶδε. B: πολλὰ γίνεται | ὅμοια, Eubulus fr. 69 K.–A.

¹⁹⁰ Lettered objects (or even letters) could also be used as recognition tokens: cf. *Adesp.* fr. 1084. 29–33 K.–A., Plaut. *Rudens* 1156–65, and Hunter 1983: 160. D’Angour (1999: 113 and n. 29) suggests interpreting Aristophanes fr. 71 K.–A. (Σαμίων δὲ δῆμὸς ἐστίν· ὡς πολυγράμματος) from the *Babylonians*, produced by the *didaskalos* Callistratus in 426 BC with reference to the 24 letters of the Ionian alphabet, ‘prominently displayed on the masks of the twenty-four members of the chorus’: if the *didaskalos* was a Samian (a Samian Callistratus is mentioned in connection with both the play in Andron’s *Tripod*: Phot. 498.15 = Suda σ 77, who preserve the fragment, and the reform of the alphabet in Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 106: see Jacoby, *ad loc.*), this might be a homage of the playwright to his *didaskalos*. The traditional view is that fr. 71 alluded to the punishment of branding or tattooing inflicted on the Samians, and that the chorus was made of allies treated as slaves; but for well-founded criticism see Norwood 1930, who offers a reconstruction in which the chorus of barbarian slaves were tattooed or marked with letters. If his hypothesis that the slaves were followers of Dionysus is correct, we might have here a further instance of the strong connection between theatre and writing (above, 183–6).

rather conspicuously in the plays of the *archaia*, the *mese*, and the *nea*, letter writing does not feature in a noticeable way in what remains of fifth-century comedy.¹⁹¹ A passage of Cratinus (*incertae fabulae* fr. 316 K.–A.) mentioning an *ἐπιστολή* should be interpreted as referring to an order rather than to a letter: Zonaras, who is the source of the fragment, quotes it as proof of the fact that *ἐπιστολή* was also used instead of *ἐντολή*.¹⁹² Another fragment of Cratinus (fr. 243 K.–A.), although in itself so short as to defy interpretation, might have referred to a letter, if we can trust Harpocration's comment. In discussing the *ἐπιθέτους ἐορτάς* (non-traditional festivals, or also those instituted by a vote), Harpocration (E 97 Keaney) looks for other uses of *ἐπίθετος* in prose, and finds that 'Lysias in his speech *Against Thrasybulus* [fr. 158 Carey] mentions *ἐπιθέτους ἐπιστολάς*, meaning letters given to others in order to be carried; for it was common practice to say "he gave a letter" instead of "he delivered"' (*λέγειν γὰρ ἦν εἰθισμένον 'ἐπέθηκεν ἐπιστολήν' ἀντὶ τοῦ παρέδωκεν*), as Demosthenes in the speech for Chrysippus against Phormio.¹⁹³ Cratinus in the *Trophonius* (*Κρατῖνος δ' ἐν Τροφωνίῳ*). Assuming that the lemma is complete, this means that Cratinus used the same expression. However, interpreters agree that the last phrase was followed by words of Cratinus that have been lost: the adversative-connective *δ'* points in this direction, and might moreover imply that the next quote referred to another aspect of the use. But whatever the specific meaning Cratinus might have attributed to *ἐπίθετος* here (and any of 'additional', 'fictitious', or 'entrusted for conveyance' would fit the bill in a comedy), if Harpocration was following some logical train of thought, then it is likely that Cratinus in the *Trophonius* had mentioned a letter (an oracular pronouncement?).

And, of course, a scene of letter writing figures in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, in Aristophanes' parody of Euripides' *Palamedes*: Mnesilochus, caught by the women, resorts to writing on votive tablets, in order to send a message to Euripides:

φέρει τίν' οὖν <ἄν> ἄγγελον | πέμψαιμ' ἐπ' αὐτόν; οἶδ' ἐγὼ καὶ δὴ πόρον | ἐκ τοῦ
Παλαμήδους: ὡς ἐκείνος, τὰς πλάτας | ῥίψω γράφων. ἀλλ' οὐ πάρεισιν αἱ πλάται. |
πόθεν οὖν γένοιτ' ἂν μοι πλάται πόθεν; <πόθεν;> | τί δ' ἂν εἰ ταδὶ τὰγάλματ' ἀντὶ τῶν
πλατῶν | γράφων διαρρίπτοιμι; βέλτιον πολὺ. | ξύλον γέ τοι καὶ ταῦτα κάκειν' ἦν ξύλον.
| (sings) ὦ χεῖρες ἐμαί | ἐγχειρεῖν χρὴν ἔργῳ πορίμῳ. | ἄγε δὴ πινάκων ξεστῶν δέλτοι, |
δέξασθε σμίλης ὀλοκοὺς | κήρυκας ἐμῶν μόχθων: οἷμοι | τουτὶ τὸ ῥῶ μοχθηρόν: | χώρει
χώρει. ποῖαν αὐλακα; | βάσκειτ' ἐπείγετε πάσας καθ' ὁδοὺς | κείνα ταῦτα: ταχέως χρή.
(Ar. *Thesm.* 768–84)

¹⁹¹ For a list of comic passages referring to 'reading, writing, books, inscriptions, letters, and waxed tablets' see Wise 1998: 17 n. 6 (forty-one passages, in a very incomplete list: the *Letter(s)* plays of Euthycles, Alexis, Macho, and Timocles go unmentioned, as do Menander and the *adespota comica* discussed below, and Antiphanes' *Sappho*).

¹⁹² Pace Rosenmeyer 2001: 64. Text above, 17 and n. 65. Since we do not have the context, we cannot know what exactly the *entole/epistole* would have been in Cratinus; the comparison with Aeschylus fr. 293 Radt, *ἀκούε τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς* (possibly, following a hypothesis of Hermann, words of Helios addressed to Phaethon climbing the chariot) speaks for understanding *epistole* in both passages as an oral injunction because of the evident lack of spatial distance between speaker and addressee.

¹⁹³ Dem. 34. 28: the speaker says: *οὐδὲ τὰς ἐπιστολάς ἀπέδωκας αὐτοῖς, ἃς ἡμεῖς ἐπεθήκαμεν*. The example shows how freely Harpocration refers to the original.

'Let me see, what messenger could I best send to him? Actually, I know a method, from the *Palamedes*; like him, I will write on oar-blades and throw them out. But there are no oar-blades here. Now where could I get oar-blades from, where . . . ? What if I were to write upon these votive dedications instead of on oar-blades and then throw them away? Much better! And they are even wooden, like those oars. (sings) Oh! my hands, it is necessary to set at work on an inventive and safety-providing task. Come, sheets of smooth tablets, receive the traces of my stylus, heralds of my sufferings. Oh! oh! this R is troublesome! Go on, go on. What a furrow! Come, hasten in all directions, this way, that way; speed is the word!'

Incidentally, here Aristophanes, besides parodying the *Palamedes* and fooling with the topic of long-distance communication, also plays with the shape of a specific letter by highlighting the *rho*: we may imagine that the relative has difficulties with the round part of the letter (he is possibly writing *χαίρειν*, or has reached the *rho* in *Εὐριπίδης*).¹⁹⁴ But apart from these examples, in Aristophanes and more generally in the poets of the *archaia* terms of writing refer mainly to books, lawsuits (*γραφαί*), oracles, decrees, and the like. While these are exceedingly frequent, so much so that it does not make sense to review them here, there do not seem to be other traces of letters.¹⁹⁵ Thus, in a sense, the picture offered by the *archaia* is rather different from that of Euripidean tragedy, in which letters played a (comparatively) major role. What is similar, however, is that the very frequent references to other types of writing are made incidentally, as passing comments, but are usually not central to the plot.¹⁹⁶ Scrolls may, however, appear as dramatic props, as in *Knights* and even more pointedly in *Birds*—a large part of the scenes following the *agon* is actually built on the arrival of individuals who rely on books and writing for their activities: an oracle seller (960–92), and a decree seller (1035–57), who both actually handle writings and read from them. The characterization of writing we find in Aristophanes is also interesting: as pointed out by Slater, books and writing bring with themselves the empowerment of those who possess them (that Aristophanes views this negatively is another matter).¹⁹⁷

Epistolary writing seems, however, to have featured rather prominently in the *mesē* and in the *neā*: the attested titles show that some comedies took their title from a letter, which consequently must have played an important role in the

¹⁹⁴ See Austin and Olson 2004: 261. A kind of spelling game might also be going on, such as the one present in Callias' *Lettered Tragedy*: for if, as Austin and Olson point out, there is an echo between *μόχθων* and *μοχθηρόν*, then it is striking that the letter highlighted as problematic is a *ρ*, i.e. exactly the suffix that distinguishes the adjective from the noun (both from *μοχθέω*).

¹⁹⁵ Note however *Adespota Comica* fr. 456 K.–A., discussed below, 321 n. 65. The *pinakis* whose letters a character asks another to read out, in Philyllius' *Poleis* fr. 10 K.–A., is unlikely to be a letter (*ἐκ τῆς πινακίδος διαμπερώς ὅ τι κα λέγοι | τὰ γράμμαθ', ἐρμήνευε*). A survey of literacy in old comedy is offered by Slater 1996. References to books appear in comedy at approximately the same time as they do in tragedy, with Eupolis fr. 327 K.–A. (before 412 BC, Eupolis' death) and Aristomenes fr. 9 K.–A. (this one from a play *Sorcerers*: in this context, a reference to a *bibliopoles* might have entailed a specific type of writing, associated with oracles and magic).

¹⁹⁶ Cratinus' *Pytine* presented probably the old poet as writing: see Cratinus fr. 208 and 209 K.–A., with Slater 1996: 108–19. See also Slater 1996 for a discussion of the passage from mainly oral to written scripts for comedy, a change he situates at the beginning of Aristophanes' activity—a question that need not detain us here.

¹⁹⁷ Slater 1996: 101–5. The second old woman in *Eccl.* 1050, who cites the law (*τῶν γραμμάτων εἰρηκότων*), may have brandished a copy of the decree: Slater 1996: 101 n. 8. The evidence from *Birds* is relevant, but also complex; cf. Dobrov 1993 for possible reflections of the tragic *Tereus* (and of literacy issues) in *Birds*. Detailed, important discussion of the oracle-book in *Birds*, from the point of view of writing and religion, in Henrichs 2003b: 216–22.

action. Thus Euthycles composed a play *Ἀσῶτοι ἢ Ἐπιστολή* (*Profligates, or, The Letter*); Alexis (fr. 81 K.-A.) and Macho (fr. 2 K.-A.) both wrote an *Ἐπιστολή*, while Timocles authored a play *Ἐπιστολαί* (frr. 9 and 10 K.-A.). Unluckily, in none of these instances do the fragments allow an understanding of the kind of use made of letter writing in the play.¹⁹⁸ Letters moreover feature in some plays of Menander, as well as in a few unattributed fragments. Thus in fr. 238 K.-A. of Menander's *Misogynes* a *γραμματείδιον* is qualified by *δίθυρον*, a term interpreted in a similar context by both Hesychius and Pollux as meaning *δίπτυχον*, 'folded in two'—that is, probably, a letter, or at any rate a closed, confidential document.¹⁹⁹ A letter (in the form, however, of a will) certainly played an important role in Menander's *Sicyonians*: through it the foster mother of Stratophanes, before dying, informed him that she and her husband were not his real parents; through the tokens given to him, the hero managed to find his real parents.²⁰⁰ In the *Adespota comica* fr. 1084 K.-A., 30–1 *γράμματα* (here probably a letter) found in a jar probably played a role in the final anagnorisis; letters are mentioned also in fr. Adesp. 1096 K.-A. (a *γραμματείδιον* appears three times, at ll. 25, 44, and 48, without its being possible to understand what is going on because of the condition of the papyrus) and 1139 K.-A. (again a *γραμματείδιον* at l. 4, while what follows, although very fragmentary, might indicate that the letter was read on stage). And in a fragment of the playwright Philemo, probably to be dated, because of the mention of king Magas, to the second quarter of the third century, a character claims that a letter has arrived from Magas; even though the other replies: 'Impossible, he can't write', clearly that piece of writing (possibly a fake by some ingenious slave) must have served some purpose in the plot.²⁰¹

The important presence of letters on the comic stage, obvious even from the scanty fragments of the *nea*, is confirmed by the fact that letters featured also in a number of Latin plays. Of course this cannot be taken directly as evidence that letters were important in Greek comedy: still, it is a fact that should be kept in mind.²⁰² Here too, some plays took their name from the use of a letter (and it is only reasonable to suppose that the letter giving its title to a play will have had an important role in it). Caecilius and Afranius wrote an *Epistula* (respectively a

¹⁹⁸ Jenkins 2005: 362–3.

¹⁹⁹ Hesych. δ 1775 *δίθυρον γραμματείδιον· δίπτυχον*; Pollux 10. 57: *γραμματείδιον δίθυρον ἢ τρίπτυχον ἢ καὶ πλειόνων πτυχῶν*. Compare the *πολύθυροι διαπτυχαί* of Eur. *IT* 727–8 (above, 228).

²⁰⁰ Cf. Men. *Sic.* 130–41, and 141–4 for the tokens. The document is said to be a will at 248. Another letter is mentioned by the main character Stratophanes at 136–7 (the word is *γράμματα*), as having brought to him notice of the death of his father at a time when he was in Caria. Detailed discussion in Scafuro 2004: 2–5.

²⁰¹ Philemo fr. 132 K.-A., from Plut. *De coh. ira* 9, 458 A: A. *παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως γράμμαθ' ἦκει σοι Μάγα.* | B. *Μάγα κακὸδαίμων; γράμματ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται.* 'There is a writing for you from king Magas.' B. 'Magas, you rogue? He can't write.'

²⁰² Scafuro 2004 suggests that out of six letters read out on the Plautine stage, three were present in the Greek model, while three would be Plautine inventions. Nadjo 2004, Scafuro 2004, and Jenkins 2005 identify specific Plautine aspects of the use of letters in the plays: their 'tone' and the practice of interrupting their reading (Nadjo); their composition or reading aloud on stage (Scafuro); a metatheatrical reflection on the 'realities' of speaking and writing (Jenkins). These Plautine elements may have been present already in the *nea*. (Note Scafuro's remark, 2004: 7 and n. 23, that letter writing 'has left only faint traces elsewhere in republican Rome'—but see, for instance, the fascinating fragments of a letter attributed to Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, preserved in Cornelius Nepos fr. 59 Marshall = Cugusi, *Epistolographi Latini minores*, 124. 3–4).

palliata and a *togata*), while Novius authored an *atellana* bearing the title of *Tabellaria*; letters played a role in Turpilius' *Philopator*.²⁰³ The characters in the preserved plays of Plautus do not hesitate to make use of letters, for their love affairs, in writing to their family or friends, or for business, so that about half of his plays present references to letters, real or imaginary; in four of them (*Pseudolus*, *Bacchides*, *Curculio*, and *Persa*) the text of a letter is actually read out.²⁰⁴

If the scant remains of the Greek comic plays do not allow the same type of analysis of the presence of letters that is possible for tragedy or for the Latin comic theatre, there are nonetheless some very informative passages. We shall look in detail at two, a fragment of the comedy *Sappho* by the fourth-century playwright Antiphanes and a fragment of the poet of the *nea*, Philemo (an older contemporary of Menander).

5.2.1. Antiphanes' *Sappho*: Private Writing, and Public Speech

Antiphanes' *Sappho* contains rather intriguing information relevant to our concerns: it situates epistolary writing in relation to women on the one hand, and to the polis with its rhetors on the other.

The plot of the play is not known (only two fragments survive); but it is fairly certain that the main character was the poetess Sappho, and that at some point in the play, the eponymous protagonist began proposing riddles, to which other characters gave answers. In fragment 194 K.–A. we have one such riddle, to which two solutions are given: the first one Sappho rejects—it is a masculine solution that brings into prominence the activity of the rhetors in the polis; in contrast, the solution she gives herself, the 'good' one, so to speak, shows the familiarity of the poetess with writing, and, more specifically, epistolary writing.

This text thus allows us to look at the role played by epistolary writing in comedy, and to propose a comparison with the situation in tragedy, a genre much more studied from this point of view. Moreover, this fragment offers the opportunity of looking at the relationship between the oral speech of the rhetors and the epistolary genre: for even if Sappho considers the first solution a wrong one, it must have had some degree of plausibility or her interlocutor would not have proposed it. Finally, the historical context is interesting: the *Sappho* is dated to the years 370/350 BC, at a moment in which letter writing has become a relatively common and widespread means of communication. Antiphanes' play gives us the possibility to see how epistolary writing positions itself in respect to other genres.

The fragment is preserved by Athenaeus in the tenth book of his *Deipnosophistae*, dedicated to the discussion of riddles. Athenaeus probably did not read the *Sappho*: the source for the passage seems to be Clearchus' treatise *περὶ γρίφων*, *On Riddles*. It is thus impossible to know whether the comments with which the citation is introduced are simply inferences or if they rest on a sure knowledge of

²⁰³ Caecilius: fr. 31–4 Warmington = 34–6 Ribbeck³; Afranius: Daviault 1981: 169–70; Novius: fr. 86 Ribbeck³; Turpilius: x–xi and *Philopator* frr. 12–13 Rychlewska = 195–8 Ribbeck³. See further Monaco 1965 and Nadjo 2004.

²⁰⁴ Letters in Plautus: Scafuro 2004: 20–1 lists sixteen mentions of letters; ten of these are carried on stage, and out of these, six are read aloud: Plaut. *Bacch.* 728–47, 996–1035; *Curc.* 426–36; *Pers.* 500–27; *Pseud.* 41–73 and 998–1014. See Scafuro 2004; discussion in Nadjo 2004; Jenkins 2005.

the plot of the play, and in particular, to ascertain whether in this play Sappho proposed a series of riddles or this one only.²⁰⁵ The text is as follows:

ἐν δὲ Σαπφοῖ ὁ Ἀντιφάνης αὐτὴν τὴν ποιήτριαν
προβάλλουσιν ποιεῖ γρίφους τόνδε τὸν τρόπον,
ἀπολυομένου τινὸς οὕτως. ἡ μὲν γὰρ φησιν·
Σ. ἔστι φύσις θήλεια βρέφη σφίζουσ' ὑπὸ κόλποις

αὐτῆς, ὄντα δ' ἄφωνα βοῇν ἴσθησι γεγωνόν
καὶ διὰ πόντιον οἶδμα καὶ ἡπείρου διὰ πάσης

οἷς ἐθέλει θνητῶν, τοῖς δ' οὐδὲ παρούσιν ἀκούειν

ἔξεστιν, κωφὴν δ' ἀκοῆς αἴσθησιν ἔχουσιν.
ταῦτά τις ἐπιλυομένης φησιν·

Β. ἡ μὲν φύσις γὰρ ἦν λέγεις ἔστιν πόλις,
βρέφη δ' ἐν αὐτῇ διατρέφει τοὺς ῥήτορας.
οὗτοι κεκραγότες δὲ τὰ διαπόντια
τὰκ τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ τὰπὸ Θράκης λήμματα
ἔλκουσι δεῦρο. νεμομένων δὲ πλησίον

αὐτῶν κάθηται λοιδορουμένων τ' αἰεὶ
ὁ δῆμος οὐδὲν οὐτ' ἀκούων οὐθ' ὁρών.
Σ. — — — πῶς γὰρ γένοιτ' ἂν, ὦ πάτερ,

ῥήτωρ ἄφωνος; Β. ἦν ἀλὼ τρις παρανόμων.

[— — —]²⁰⁶ καὶ μὴν ἀκριβῶς ὥοιμην
ἐγνωσκέαι τὸ ῥηθέν. ἀλλὰ δὴ λέγε.
ἔπειτα ποιεῖ τὴν Σαπφῶ διαλογομένην τὸν γρίφους
οὕτως·
Σ. θήλεια μὲν νυν ἐστὶ φύσις ἐπιστολή,
βρέφη δ' ἐν αὐτῇ περιφέρει τὰ γράμματα
ἄφωνα δ' ὄντα <ταῦτα> τοῖς πόρρω λαλεῖ
οἷς βούλεθ'. ἕτερος δ' ἂν τύχῃ τις πλησίον
ἑστὼς ἀναγινώσκοντος οὐκ ἀκούσεται.

In Sappho, Antiphanes represents the poet
propounding riddles in the following manner,
while somebody solves them thus. Sappho says:
S. There is a feminine being that keeps its babes in
its bosom,

safe; and even though voiceless they raise a
sonorous cry
over the waves of the sea and across all the dry
land

for those they want among mortals; and even
those who are not present
may hear; their sense of hearing, however, is dull.
Someone solves this by saying:

B. The being of which you speak, that is the polis,
the children which she nurtures, the rhetors.
These by their bawling draw over here receipts
across the sea, from Asia and from Thrace.

And while they split the revenues and brawl
forever on,
the people sits near them, and doesn't see nor
hear.

S. [What nonsense!] How could then, father, a
rhetor
be voiceless? B. If three times convicted
of unconstitutional measures.

[— — —] I thought I knew what you were talking
about. Now tell me yourself.

Then, Antiphanes represents Sappho as solving the
riddle thus:

S. The feminine being, then, is an epistle,
the babes in her, the letters it carries round;
they, though voiceless, talk to whom they desire
when far away; yet if another happens to stand near
when it is read, he will not hear.

(Antiphanes fr. 194 K.-A. = Athenaeus 10. 450 E -
451 B)

²⁰⁵ Eustathius, in commenting on the *πίναξ πτυκτός* sent with Bellerophon to Lycia (Hom. *Il.* 6. 168–70, see above), cites, through Athenaeus' *Epitome*, the fragment of the *Sappho*, with very minor differences in respect to Athenaeus (Eust. in Hom. *Il.* (6.169) 632. 10: 'Ἐτι ἱστέον καὶ ὁ πτυκτός πίναξ . . . τὴν παρὰ τοῖς ὑστέροις δημοῖ ἐπιστολήν, εἰς ἣν γριφεύουσα ἡ Σαπφὼ ἐγραψεν οὕτω . . . (note the word-play *γριφεύουσα* / *ἐγραψεν*), 'Moreover it should be said that the folded tablet . . . points to what later is going to be the letter, concerning which in a riddle Sappho wrote as follows: . . .'; but according to the archbishop, Sappho herself would have been the author of the riddle!)

²⁰⁶ At l. 13, Jacobs proposed οὐδὲν λέγεις (and Kaibel *ληρεῖς ἔχων*, rejected by Cobet as unseemly in a daughter answering back to her father). Something of this kind must have stood here. L. Holford-Strevens suggests (*per litteras*) that we assume at 15 (where we have exactly the same kind of lacuna, and where no solution has been proposed, apart from Cobet's own *παίζεις ἔχων*), a quick change of

This text has been discussed more than once. Bernard Knox, in an important article published in 1968, referred to it as one of the main, and earliest, sources for the practice of silent reading in antiquity.²⁰⁷ A number of studies on Sappho and on the implications of her gender for the reception of her work refer to Antiphanes' fragment, usually concentrating on the second solution of the riddle.²⁰⁸ Jesper Svenbro has also made use of the second solution, the one proposed by Sappho, to support an allegorical interpretation of Sappho fr. 31 V. (the famous poem on jealousy, *φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν*), in the context of a larger study on the anthropology of reading in ancient Greece. In Svenbro's allegorical reading, the 'I' of the poem is Sappho herself; the feminine 'you' is the written poem, while the third person designates the reader of the poem; Sappho's jealousy depends on the fact that she will have to separate herself from the poem, which is thus to be understood as an allegory of writing. Antiphanes' fragment, in which Sappho defines the letter as a feminine being, carrying in her womb children who are signs, can of course support such an interpretation.²⁰⁹ However, Svenbro's fascinating reading presupposes a culture of literacy which it is difficult to accept for seventh- and sixth-century Lesbos. While the possibility of an anachronistic reading of fr. 31 by Antiphanes cannot be excluded, Antiphanes may not have thought of fr. 31 when composing this part of his play: for the reference to Sappho's fr. 31 explains only one answer to the riddle, the second one, but not the first. The same tendency to focus on the riddle and on its second, 'good', solution, ignoring altogether the first one, characterizes Rosenmeyer's discussion.²¹⁰

In contrast, those scholars who are interested in the relationship between the text and fourth-century Athenian politics, in particular the issue of corruption, show the reverse tendency of quoting only the first solution, omitting Sappho's own. Thus Wankel for instance focuses exclusively on the corruption of the politicians and on the relationship between the fragment and the Athenian political situation, not even mentioning the second solution.²¹¹ Both approaches, the purely literary one, and the purely historical one, ignore one part of the text, and cannot thus offer a really satisfying interpretation.

In a recent contribution, however, Richard Martin has pointed to the way forward, by offering an interpretation of Antiphanes' fragment in which he carefully uncovers the system of opposition underlying it: masculinity, connected with orality and publicity, versus femininity, connected with epistolary writing and privacy.²¹² But he too is mainly interested in the female voice and in Sappho's

interlocutor; Sappho might have again stated *οὐδὲν λόγεις* (or, in both situations, *παίλεις ἔχων*; Cobet's proposal too requires a change of interlocutor). See the apparatus of Kassel–Austin, *ad loc.*

²⁰⁷ Knox 1968: 421–35 (esp. 432–3); see also Gavrilov 1997: 56–73 (esp. 68).

²⁰⁸ See e.g. Williamson 1995: 14–16.

²⁰⁹ Svenbro 1993: 145–59 (and for Antiphanes' fragment, 158–9). The reading *φοι* of Apoll. Dysc. *Pron.* 1. 59 Schn. instead of *μοι* in the first line would not affect Svenbro's argument. Most 1995 presents a good discussion of the interpretations offered of Sappho in general and of fr. 31 in particular. Traill 2005 has convincingly shown that Plautus, *Miles* 1216–83 is a spoof of fr. 31, probably mediated by the unknown author of a Greek play *Ἀλάζων* (cf. Plaut. *Mil.* 8–9); however, in Plautus (and presumably in the *Ἀλάζων*) the fragment is read literally.

²¹⁰ Rosenmeyer 2001: 96–7.

²¹¹ Wankel 1991a: 34–6.

²¹² Martin 2001: 73–4. Olson 2007: 200–3 offers a line-by-line commentary on the passage, good on details but otherwise rather flat. Yatromanolakis 2007: 300–5 looks at the riddle mainly for what it can

answer, and finds it to be the 'right' one. In what follows, I will offer a detailed interpretation of the fragment along the lines sketched by Martin; but rather than looking for the right solution, I shall try to explore the meaning deriving from the tension between the two answers. The first step must, however, be a reconstruction, inasmuch as one is possible, of the original literary context of the fragment: the plot is not known, but it is still possible to define what 'type' of comedy the *Sappho* was.

5.2.1.1. *The Generic Context of the Sappho*

According to the anonymous author of the *De comoedia*, Antiphanes would have been, with Alexis, the most illustrious poet of Middle Comedy; his activity spanned most of the fourth century BC, and he won thirteen victories in Athens, five at the Dionysia and eight at the Lenaia.²¹³ Our sources attribute to him the composition of a remarkably high number of comedies (260 according to the anonymous *De comoedia*, 280 or 365 according to the *Suda*). Whatever the exact number, it is clear that not all of these plays can have been composed for the Athenian stage. Antiphanes must have produced plays 'on paper' for itinerant companies, or—maybe—even simply for reading. The titles of his plays (140 titles have been transmitted) show a production typical of the authors of the *mese*: mythological travesties are frequent; more than twenty plays took their title from the personal names of characters (for instance *hetaerae*), or their origin (*Βοιωτίς*, *Ἀεκάς*, *Αἰγύπτιοι*); more than thirty titles seem to have concerned 'types' (either moral types, such as the *Μισοπόνηρος*, or professional ones, such as the *Ζωγράφος*). Interestingly, Antiphanes wrote also a *Τριταγωνιστής* (fr. 207 K.-A.), in which scenic artists were brought to the stage; and he spoke of his art in a long fragment from the play *Ποίησις* (fr. 189 K.-A. = Athen. 6. 222A). All this combines to produce the image of a 'literate' and at times self-reflexive playwright.

What kind of play was the *Sappho*? The poetess from Lesbos was not a character unknown to the comic stage: at least six comic authors, from the *archaia* to the *nea*, wrote plays bearing the title *Sappho*, whose content, however, it is impossible to reconstruct, with the exception of Diphilus' play; to Sappho's biography may also be attached most of those plays (numbering seven) bearing the titles of *Phaon* or *Leucadia*.²¹⁴ It is of course not necessarily the case that all the plays taking their name from Phaon or from the rocks of Leucas brought onto the stage the story of Sappho and Phaon.²¹⁵ But even if they concerned

tell about the reception of Sappho in comedy (see 308 for the clearest statement of his way of viewing the processes whereby her character is invested with new meanings, here and in the other plays linked to her).

²¹³ *De comoedia* 3. 45, 10 Kost. See the *testimonia* in Kassel–Austin, *PCG*, ii, 312–13; according to the *Suda*, α 2735, he was born in the 93rd Olympiad (between 408 and 404 BC), began his career as a comic poet in c.388, and died aged 74, i.e. around 330 BC. See Nesselrath 1996: 781–2; Konstantakos 2000: 173–98; and Ceccarelli 2004.

²¹⁴ Detailed discussion and comparison with other poets' presence on the comic stage in Ceccarelli 2004: 15–16; Yatromanolakis 2007: 295–9. Traill 2005 offers a splendid discussion of the presence of Sappho in Greek and Latin comedy, and in particular in Plautus' *Miles*.

²¹⁵ Arnott 1996b: 224–5 insists on severing any links to Sappho in the plots of Menander's and Turpilus' *Leucadia* plays; on the same lines, but for Alexis, Arnott 1996a: 394–5 (he finds, however,

everyday people and their vicissitudes, they may have mirrored in their plot the legendary story—at any rate, they did refer to it, as lines 11–16 of Menander’s *Leucadia* show. And Sappho’s love stories were certainly the subject of Diphilus’ *Sappho*.²¹⁶

In Antiphanes’ *Sappho*, however, the poetess was presented as proposing riddles. This points to a relationship with another type of comedy, in which riddles and riddling characters featured prominently. ‘Riddle comedies’ are well represented in Antiphanes’ oeuvre: they comprise plays such as the *Μνήματα*, the *Παροιμίες*, and the *Πρόβλημα*. For all the difficulties that we may have in imagining how the plays worked, yet the plots of *Mnemata* and *Paroimiai* must have somehow revolved around proverbs and memorable sayings, while the solution of riddles must have been at the centre of the *Problema*.

For this second tradition, too, there were important precedents, starting already with Epicharmus’ *Σφίγξ* and with Cratinus’ *Κλεοβουλῖναι*.²¹⁷ On the basis of the few fragments of the *Cleobulinae* we have (fr. 92–101 K.–A.) and of what is otherwise known of the activities of Cleobulina and of her father Cleobulus, it has been suggested that the plot centred on a group of women acting as ‘Cleobulinai’ (or, even better, accompanying a Cleobulina present on the stage) and proposing riddles.²¹⁸ The fragments do not allow one to know, however, who was supposed to find an answer to the riddles. The best solution still seems that advanced by Zieliński, who, basing himself on a well-known folkloric tale, suggested that the women submitted riddles to their lovers.²¹⁹ Such a hypothesis has the advantage of linking together the riddles, an *agon*, and amorous stories. This type of comedy centred on riddles seems to have grown in importance: it is certainly well attested among the plays of the *mese*.²²⁰ The relatively important place of riddles and

Wilamowitz’s suggestion that mythical incidents might have been transformed into stories of ordinary people ‘appealing’). While the fragments do indeed reflect vicissitudes of everyday people, the name Dorcium for the girl in Turpilius’ play is interesting, for the name Doricha can be restored in Sappho fr. 15 (a minimal restoration, for whose plausibility see now Yatromanolakis 2007: 330–2), and tradition, as represented by Strabo 17.1.33 and Athenaeus 13. 596 CD (who in turn quotes Posidippus), portrayed Doricha as the lover of Sappho’s brother. The ‘everyday people’ might have been modelled very closely on the ‘legendary’ figures. A contextualization of the stories involving Sappho, Charaxus, and Doricha/Rhodopis is in Yatromanolakis 2007: 312–37.

²¹⁶ Δίφιλος ὁ κωμωιδιοποιὸς πεποίηκεν ἐν Σαπφοῦ δράματι Σαπφοῦς ἑραστὰς Ἀρχίλοχον καὶ Ἰππώναντα, Athen. 13. 599 D. Sappho had had other lovers: Hermesianax fr. 7. 47–56 Powell presents as lovers of the poetess Alcaeus and Anacreon. These texts are all of the Hellenistic period, but the legend certainly began earlier, as the famous Attic black figure vase of the first half of the fifth century (München 2416) representing Alcaeus and Sappho shows (Williamson 1995, 6–7, with fig. 2). On the early reception of Sappho see now Yatromanolakis 2007, esp. 63–164 for the iconography (and for this vase 73–9, with fig. 3a), 293–312 for comedy, and 348–61 for Hermesianax and the tradition he reflects.

²¹⁷ The *Sphinx* can be dated to the first half of the fifth century BC; as for the *Cleobulinae*, both 450 BC (Wilamowitz 1899) and the years 439–437 (Pieters 1946: 144–6) have been proposed.

²¹⁸ According to Diog. Laert. 1. 89, the tyrant Cleobulus of Lindus composed c.3000 verses of song and riddles; as for Cleobulina’s status, scholars are divided: some see in her an invention of Cratinus (so Wilamowitz 1899: 219–22), and put the three riddles which go under her name among Cratinus’ fragments; others (Bowie 1999: 576) think that the riddles may have been attributed to a poetess ‘Cleobulina’ independently of Cratinus (her fragments are in West, *IEG*, ii, 50–1). Further on this Ceccarelli 2004.

²¹⁹ Zieliński 1931: 31 and n. 16.

²²⁰ Cf. Eubulus *Sphingokarion* fr. 107 K.–A, preserving four riddles one after the other; riddles may have occupied a prominent position also in Alexis’ *Aesop*. For the links connecting Aesop, Solon,

oracular pronouncements, traditionally composed in hexameters, in the plays of this period is one of the reasons that explain the overall rather important proportion of the hexameter *kata stichon* in these same plays.²²¹

The privileged context for the presentation and solution of riddles in these plays seems to have been the symposium;²²² as a long passage of Antiphanes' *Problema* shows, hetaerae will have been the main proponents of such riddles. This was also the case in Alexis' *Cleobulina*, whose fr. 109 alludes to a courtesan, Sinope; and it is explicitly stated in fr. 22 K.-A. of Anaxilas' *Neottis*, a long passage in which a man twice compares women to Sphinxes speaking through riddles.²²³ A further aspect worth stressing is that very often one of the solutions to these riddles points to actual Athenian politics, while a second answer addresses personal issues: the dual solution enabled the playwright to poke fun at women (for instance), while keeping up the tradition of attacks on politicians that remained, even in the fourth century, such an important part of comedy.²²⁴

Thus, Antiphanes' *Sappho* should be located at the intersection of two comic traditions, one bringing onto the stage the amorous private life of the poetess, and one which gave riddles a central place in the play.

Before we move on to the interpretation of Sappho's riddle and its two solutions, however, we must ask a question concerning its status in the context of the play: should we consider it as one of a series of many riddles proposed by the principal character, or can we attribute to it a special status, a role in the plot? Barring the discovery of new fragments, it is a question to which no final answer can be given; however, the only other fragment from the *Sappho* which we have (fr. 195 K.-A.) might incline the balance in favour of the second possibility. It is, as luck would have it, a very short fragment: commenting on the word *βιβλιογράφος*, 'copyist', Pollux (7. 211) says that the term was used in Antiphanes' *Sappho*. The plot referred thus at least twice to writing—and the riddle concerning epistolary writing might have played an important role in it.²²⁵ It certainly was not a traditional riddle, but rather an invention of Antiphanes, for no other versions of it appear in the later collections of riddles (Athenaeus knew it probably from

Socrates, and *Cleobulina* in a sympotic context, see Ceccarelli 2004, with further bibliography; *Sappho* too can be seen as close to Aesop.

²²¹ On the importance of riddles in the *mese* see already schol. Dion. Thr. 479, characterizing the *mese* as *αἰνιγματώδης*; Meineke 1839: 273–8; Pretagostini 1987: 249–51; Arnott 1996: 293 (on Alexis' *Cleobulina*); Hunter 1983: 200–7 (on Eubulus' *Sphingokarion*).

²²² Fr. 122 K.-A. of Antiphanes' *Knoithideus* or *Gastron* is particularly interesting, because it not only contextualizes riddles in the symposium, but exemplifies these sympotic riddles with an instance (*ὁ τι φέρων τις μὴ φέροι*, fr. 122, 4) that may allude to fr. 101 K.-A. of Cratinus' *Cleobulinai* (*φέροικος*), thus supporting the hypothesis of a common riddling culture on which the comic poets built their variations. See also Martin 2001.

²²³ Anaxilas fr. 22 K.-A., 22–31. Cf. also Callias fr. 28 K.-A. 'Sphinx from Megara', an expression which became proverbial to designate hetaerae. Callias' (?) *Spectacle of Letters* also brought together women, riddles, and literacy (above, 235–6).

²²⁴ Pointed out by Meineke 1839: 278 for the *Sphingokarion*, but equally valid for Antiphanes' *Sappho*; see also Ohlert 1886: 100.

²²⁵ Differently Knox 1968: 431, for whom the 'bad' solution, with its reference to actual politics, would have been the starting-point, around which a riddle not having any further connection with the plot would have been built. But see Olson 2007: 202, who finds the 'political' answer rather badly constructed: 'it may be that the explanation is not offered seriously and that the protest in 15–16 is therefore made tongue-in-cheek'.

Clearchus' treatise *On Riddles*; but even for Athenaeus, the riddle remained linked to the comedy from which it originated).²²⁶

Some other comic fragments dealing with the life of Sappho present allusions to writing. In the *Phaon* of Plato Comicus, a masculine character announces his decision to find some quiet corner to read through a βιβλίον; when, at the request of another character, the first one reads a few lines, we realize that this is a cookery book, written, however, in oracular hexameters (could this have been a parody of Sappho reading her own poems?).²²⁷ Similarly, a fragment *ex incertis fabulis* from a *palliata* by Turpilius, preserved by Jerome, presents a reflection on letters that might be linked to the *Sappho*:

Turpilius comicus tractans de vicissitudine litterarum sola, inquit, res est, quae homines absentes praesentes facit.²²⁸ (Letter 8, 31, ed. Ilberg = fr. 1 *inc. fab.* Rychlewska, 213 Ribbeck³)

The comic author Turpilius, in discussing the reciprocity of the letters, says that they are the only instrument that can make present those who are absent.

This fragment has been tentatively attributed to the *Philopator*, a play in which a letter was lost and furtively taken by someone else (as can be seen from fr. 12–13); but an alternative attribution to the *Leucadia*, a play that might have been connected to the Sappho story, has been suggested.²²⁹ While the idea that the letter has the capacity of rendering present those who are distant is a fairly widespread one, there are undeniable similarities between Turpilius' text and the second answer to the riddle proposed in Antiphanes' *Sappho*. If this passage indeed came from a play bringing Sappho onto the stage, it would support the hypothesis that a letter (or writing) played a part in some at least of the *Sappho* plays. As we have seen, this would not have been the only instance of an important role being given to a letter in the peripeteia of a comic play.

5.2.1.2. The Riddle

So far, I have tried to sketch the main lines of the tradition within which Antiphanes' *Sappho* should be located. But it is time to address now the riddle itself, keeping in mind that riddles have in Greece a special epistemological status. Riddles are a mode of knowledge built around a structural aporia, a dead end: no

²²⁶ Cf. Schultz 1912: 41: 'der Brief als weibliches Wesen, das Kindlein unter seinem Busen bewahrt, [ist] mir in der übrigen Rätsel-Literatur nicht vorkommen und wohl auch erst durch überaus künstliches Anknüpfen an das zufällig feminine Wort ἐπιστολή überhaupt möglich.' A riddle having as its solution 'the letter' is in the *Veglie autunnali divise in cento enigmi per veglia di Fosildo Mirtuzio, Accademico Brillante* (Venice, 1796), veglia terza, no. 47: 'Già più di me non v'ha chi giri il mondo, | o morta, o viva sia, son io sostegno, | per mia virtute, a cui non v'ha secondo, | d'ogni città, castel, e d'ogni regno. | Volo, cammino, ancor scarsa di pondo, | necessaria a qualunque sia d'ingegno; | or già parlo lontana, ed or vicina, | senza lingua né tosca, né latina.' (Its origin is unknown.)

²²⁷ Plato com. *Phaon* fr. 189 K.-A.: ἐγὼ δ' ἐνθάδ' ἐν τῇ ἐρημίᾳ | τοῦτι διελθεῖν βούλομαι τὸ βιβλίον | πρὸς ἐμαυτόν. B. ἔστι δ', ἀντιβολῶ σε, τοῦτο τί; | A. Φιλοξένου καὶ τις ὀψαρτυσία. | B. ἐπίδειξον αὐτὴν ἥ τις ἔστ'. A. ἄκουε δὴ. | ἄρξομαι ἐκ βολβοῖο, τελευτήσω δ' ἐπὶ θύνον. One would expect hexameters in didactic epic, as in Archestratus; but the adjective *καινός*, in connection with the name Philoxenos, might have recalled the famous writer of dithyrambs: a play on poetry is going on.

²²⁸ This is the text of Rychlewska 1971, who restores a trochaic septenarius; Ribbeck 1898: 130 had suggested: *Sola res quae homines absentes <nobis> praesentes facit.*

²²⁹ Pastorino 1955: 43–5.

riddle has a simple, clear solution, and typically the solutions offered oscillate between banality and absurdity.²³⁰ As a result, we should resist accepting Sappho's indication and considering the answer of the 'father' wrong: both answers are valid and wrong at the same time. To get the full meaning of the riddle, we must explore the tension enacted in the riddle between the speech of the rhetors and epistolary writing.

The text of the riddle itself, couched in hexameters, harks back to the genre of epic and oracular parody; but the main literary referents for these verses are on the one hand Aristophanes and the comic tradition, on the other, tragedy.²³¹

The first hexameter opens in the way typical of riddles, with ἔστι followed by the subject, as in Aristophanes' *Knights*, but also, for instance, in fr. 94 K.–A. of Cratinus' *Cleobulinai* and in Eubulus' *Sphingocarion* (*Riddling Carion*).²³² Eubulus is worth closer examination, for the question asked concerns a creature

that lacks a tongue but speaks (ἔστι λαλῶν ἄγλωσσος), whose female shares the name with the male, a treasurer of its own winds, hairy, but sometimes hairless, saying things that make no sense to the sensible (ἄξύνετα ξυνετοῖσι λέγων), and making one law/music follow on the other (νόμον ἐκ νόμου ἔλκων). (Eubul. fr. 106. 1–3 K.–A.)

Here too, two solutions are given—which are in fact one: Callistratos (a rhetor, the 'wrong' solution); a *πρωκτός λαλητικός*, 'a chattering arsehole'.²³³ Riddles concerning beings that speak and do not speak are numerous;²³⁴ those concerning specifically letters seem to go back all the way to fifth-century drama.

Three tragedies of Euripides are among the most important literary referents for Sappho's riddle: the *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, the *Palamedes*, and the

²³⁰ Cf. Jedrkiewicz 1997: 40–1; Pucci 1996, and especially 15–105 on the aporetic and tragic structure of riddles; Martin 2001. For the terminology, Schultz 1914: 88–9; see also Gärtner 2001: 754–8, with bibliography.

²³¹ A good instance of how these traditions overlap is offered by v. 3, καὶ διὰ πόντιον οἶδμα καὶ ἡπείρου διὰ πάσης: the first part recalls Ar. Av. 250, ἐπὶ πόντιον οἶδμα θαλάσσης (the song of the hoopoe calling all his winged friends, in a passage alluding to Alcman fr. 26, 2–3 P.), which in turn is the result of the association ('hyper-heroical': Dunbar 1995: 221) of πόντιον οἶδμα (Eur. IA 704) and ἄλμυρόν οἶδμα θαλάσσης (Hom. H. Dem. 14).

²³² Ar. Equ. 1037: ἔστι γυνή, τέξει δὲ λέονθ' ἱεραῖς ἐν Ἀθήναις; Ar. Equ. 1058–9: ἔστι Πύλος πρὸ Πύλοιο; Cratinus, fr 94 K.–A.: ἔστιν ἄκμων καὶ σφύρα νεανία εὐτριχὶ πόλῃ. This is a typically Homeric verse opening; cf. Hom. Od. 3. 293, 4. 844, 15. 393, 19. 353.

²³³ On Callistratus' status as rhetor cf. Dem. 18. 219; Hyp. 3. 1. See on him the short remarks of Olson 2007: 221. The wording of v. 3, ἀξύνετα ξυνετοῖσι λέγων, plays on Eur. Phoen. 1506, δυσξυνέτου ξυνετόν μέλος ἔγωγα Σφίγγος, as well as Eur. IT 1092, εὐξύνετον ξυνετοῖσι βοᾶν, said by the chorus of the song of the halcyon; but also, as L. Holford–Stevens points out to me, on Pindar, Ol. 2. 85, ὡκέα βέλη... φωνάνα συνετοῖσιν, 'arrows that speak to those who can understand'.

²³⁴ Hunter 1983: 201 mentions, besides Antiphanes' *Sappho*, Euripides, *Palamedes* fr. 578 Kannicht; Simias, *Anth. Pal.* 7. 193. 4 (a grasshopper); Kaibel *Epigr.* 234 (a gravestone). The fr. 96 K.–A. of Cratinus' *Cleobulinai* might be added; see also the following votive epigram in elegiac distichs, 'said to be by Sappho': παῖδες, ἄφωνος εἰσα τότ' ἐννέπω, αἶ τις ἔρηται, | φωνὰν ἀκαμάταν κατθεμένα πρὸ ποδῶν, 'Children, although voiceless, I answer when anyone asks, having set down at my feet a voice that is never weary', followed (vv. 3–6) by the 'text', i.e. the inscription engraved on the base of the statue talking here (*Anth. Pal.* 6. 269). All these texts (including Antiphanes fr. 194. 2 (ὄντα δ' ἄφωνα βοῶν ἴσσησι) and 5 (κωφὴν δ' ἀκοῆς αἰσθησιν)) are built on games of oxymora. Discussion of the games of opposites as typical of riddles in Schultz 1914: 67 ('Gegensatz-Symbolik'), who quotes Arist. *Poet.* 22, 1458^b26: αἰνίγματος γὰρ ἰδέα αὕτη ἐστὶ· τὸ λέγοντα ὑπάρχοντα ἀδύνατα συνάψαι.

Hippolytus. As we have seen, in all of these plays a letter was central to the plot; the fragment from Antiphanes is in close intertextual relationship with them. The only link with the *Hippolytus* is in the use of *βοήν* for the sound emitted by the 'babes' (compare the silent screams of the tablet in Eur. *Hipp.* 877). In the *Iphigenia*, the eponymous character, when explaining how she wanted news of her plight to be brought to Orestes in Argos, had pointed to a tablet, adding (v. 763) *αὐτὴ φράσει σιγῶσα τὰγγεγραμμένα*, 'by itself it will silently communicate what is written'. At issue was communication at a distance, as in Sappho's solution; but needless to say, in the *Iphigenia* the recognition was brought about not by the tablet, but by Iphigenia's own loud 're-creation' of it—had the tablet remained true to its essence, Orestes would have been sacrificed. As for the *Palamedes*, the echoes between the fragment of Antiphanes and fr. 578 Kannicht are fairly close. Not only does the same word *ἄφωνα* appear in both texts (although with a slightly different meaning),²³⁵ also the idea that writing allows communication at distance is exactly the same and is put across in a similar way. Riddles are another element connecting the character of Palamedes with the Sappho of this fragment: a fragment of Anaxandrides' comedy *Gerontomania* attributed to Radamanthys and Palamedes the invention of *geloia* (jests), which included also riddles.²³⁶ Finally, within the field of interpretations created by the riddle, Sappho positions herself on the side of epistolary writing; and Palamedes, as we have seen, is the epistolary hero par excellence.²³⁷

But if Sappho took on the role of a Palamedes, then her letter writing may have been felt as potentially problematic: after all, Palamedes is the hero who dies because of a false letter accusing him unjustly, a victim of rhetors making improper use of written communication. Possibly a letter played a negative role in the plot of the *Sappho*—but this must remain a pure hypothesis. What is certain is that all the tragic associations of this fragment are negative indeed.

In the *Palamedes*, Odysseus was the clever politician who pushed Agamemnon against Palamedes, and who forged the letter that was the hero's undoing. Who are the rhetors in Antiphanes' fragment? Obviously, politicians who probably also held some military command; but it is impossible to put specific names to them.²³⁸ It is, however, possible to give more precision to the rhetors as a group.

²³⁵ Stobaeus, who has preserved the *Palamedes* fragment, has *aphona kai phonounta*, which fits with the oxymoronic tradition outlined above (some interpreters, including Jouan and van Looy 2000, Scodel 1980: 91, and Jenkins 2006: 20, accept the correction *φωνήεντα*: see above, 81 and n. 76).

²³⁶ Anaxandr. *Gerontomania* fr. 10 K.-A.: τὸν ἀσύμβολον εἶρε γέλοια λέγειν Παδάμανθος καὶ Παλαμῆδης, the intellectual contribution replacing thus the contribution in food. For the nexus of ideas behind this see above, 68–9, 79–81.

²³⁷ Detienne 1989; Ceccarelli 2002: 16–20; Jenkins 2005: 15–36; see above, 72–81.

²³⁸ Edmonds (1959: 263 n. h) goes much further than the evidence allows when he notes, concerning the revenues from Asia or Thrace: 'this, combined with the "epistle" below, suggests March 341, after Philip had written to complain of the Athenian commander in the Chersonese, Diopieithes, who was plundering ships and levying blackmail in the N. Aegean in order to pay his troops, and had held his envoy to ransom, action which Demosthenes defended against Aeschines, who was thought to be acting as an agent of Philip; about the same time the Persian king was privily sending money to Diopieithes and perhaps also—this is uncertain—to Demosthenes.' I doubt that the reference to a letter in the play, in the context in which it is made, may have been as topical as that. See rather on the date Wankel 1991a: 36 (367 as *terminus post quem*), with the apparatus of Kassel and Austin. However, Wankel's further suggestion that the end of the 360s should be excluded because at this time there are a

A *rhētor* is someone who is ‘active as speaker in the assembly’, someone who frequently speaks on policies concerning the city, in front of the city.²³⁹ But at Athens, and at this moment in time, the term has a more specific meaning. In the fourth century, the rhetors are a specific policy-making group, different from magistrates (who must give accounts, *euthynai*, at the end of their term of service) and from *idiotai*, private citizens. In fact, already in the fifth century the rhetors had been able to control decisions by organizing themselves in informal groups, and had thus attracted rather negative connotations, in comedy, but also in other genres.²⁴⁰ The term is relatively frequent in comedy; moreover, Crates had written a play *Rhetores*, and a comedy bearing this title may be attributed also to Nicostratus, a comic author of the *mese*.²⁴¹

Numerous passages of Aristophanes show that most of the points raised by Antiphanes concerning the rhetors are not ad hoc inventions, but are part of a discourse about the city and those who are supposed to direct its policies, conducted mainly by the comic poets. Thus in *Acharnians* the contrast between generations is presented in the following terms:

οἱ γέροντες οἱ παλαιοὶ μεμφόμεσθα τῇ πόλει· οὐ γὰρ ἀξίως ἐκείνων ὦν ἐναυμαχήσαμεν
| γηροβοσκούμεσθ' ὑφ' ὑμῶν, ἀλλὰ δεινὰ πάσχομεν, | οἷ τινες γέροντας ἄνδρας ἐμβαλόντες
ἐς γραφάς | ὑπὸ νεανίσκων ἑατε καταγελάσθαι ῥητόρων, | οὐδὲν ὄντας, ἀλλὰ κωφούς καὶ
παρεξηλημμένους, . . . οὐχ ὁρῶντες οὐδὲν εἰ μὴ τῆς δίκης τὴν ἡλύγην. (676–81 and 684)

‘We, the veterans, blame the city. For we are not tended by you in a manner worthy of our deeds on the sea, but suffer shameful abuse: you allow that we, old men, be thrown into trials, where young politicians make fun of us, who are now deaf nothings who have lost their music . . . not discerning anything if not the darkness of our case.’

In the larger context of an opposition between generations, here and in what follows (until 718) Aristophanes develops aspects such as the old men’s voices, now similar to the sound of an *aulos* that has been played beyond the limit, their deafness, and their incapacity to see, which will reappear in the answer given by the ‘father’, that is, a relatively old man, in the Antiphanes fragment;²⁴²

number of lawsuits against generals, while in the play the demos is portrayed as not seeing and not hearing, seems to me to take too seriously a comic quip. See Harvey 1985 for a survey of corruption and its vocabulary in fourth-century Athens.

²³⁹ Dover 1993: 242.

²⁴⁰ On the rhetors as a group with specific aims and connotations, see Canfora 1991: 11–17; Ober 1989: 156–91; and the studies collected in Hansen 1989. For the opposition *rhetores*–*idiotai*, see Rubinstein 1998. The first epigraphical instance of the term is IG i³, 46. 25; already in the fifth century the debate in the assembly was dominated by a relatively small group of rhetors: Olson 2002: 80. Critias fr. 88 B 22 D.–K. (τρόπος δὲ χρηστὸς ἀσφαλέστερος νόμου· τὸν μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἂν διαστρέβηαι ποτέ | ῥήτωρ δύναιτο, τὸν δ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω | λόγοις ταρασσὼν πολλάκις λυμαίνεται) is particularly interesting, because here a negative view of the rhetors overlaps with a negative view of the (written) law.

²⁴¹ Fifteen examples in Aristophanes, and seven in other comic poets. The only fragment from Crates’ *Rhetores*, fr. 30 K.–A., does not allow any inferences as to the plot. Nicostratus, fr. 24 K.–A.: ἐξωρμενικότες δυσχερεῖς παλναίρετοι, if it concerns rhetors (as suggested by Kaibel: see Kassel and Austin’s apparatus), betrays a negative connotation.

²⁴² Olson 2002, *ad loc.*, interprets κωφούς in Ar. *Ach.* 681 as ‘mute’; but if so taken, the term would double with παρεξηλημμένους, which is why I prefer ‘deaf’. The term appears with this meaning in Antiphanes fr. 194 K.–A., 5 (and deafness is stressed at v. 12).

conversely, the young men hit with their rounded words (*στρογγύλοις τοῖς ῥήμασιν*, 685); they set up verbal traps (*σκανδάληθρ' ἱστάς ἐπῶν*, 686), and all the while produce an unending chatter (*λάλοι*, 705 and 716).

The idea that the (old) *demos* is being duped by the rhetors (in the specific case, Cleon) is at the core of the plot of the *Knights*; it comes to the fore explicitly at the end of the play (vv. 1349–53). As for the screams, they are one of the hallmarks of the rhetor: one may compare *Peace* 635–7, a passage in which Hermes describes how the rhetors, with their ‘forked’ screams (*κεκράγμασιν*), had chased away the goddess.²⁴³ Finally, polis, *demos*, and rhetors are joined together in Aristophanes’ *Plutus*: at vv. 567–70 *Penia* points out that the rhetors in the cities (*ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν τοὺς ῥήτορας*) behave justly towards the people and the city itself (*περὶ τὸν δῆμον καὶ τὴν πόλιν*) as long as they are at the beginning of their career and thus poor; as soon as they have gained wealth at the commons’ expense (*ἀπὸ τῶν κοινῶν*) they become unjust, and start intriguing and attacking the people itself.²⁴⁴

The fragments of other comic poets go in the same direction: thus for instance a character in an unidentified play of Plato Comicus laments the proliferation of rhetors and compares them to the mythical hydra:

‘for if one son-of-a bitch (*πονηρός*) dies, two rhetors grow back; for we don’t have an Iolaus in our city who’ll cauterize their heads. You’ve let someone bugger you; that’s why you’ll be a rhetor!’ (fr. 202 K.–A., trans. Olson slightly modified)²⁴⁵

Two more terms can yield insights into the connotations of letter writing and the speech of rhetors in Antiphanes’ fragment: the adjective *ἄφωνος*, and the verb *λαλεῖν*. *ἄφωνος*, ‘voiceless’, appears three times in the fragment: in the text of the riddle (v. 2), in Sappho’s comments to the first solution (v. 13), and in the solution supported by the poetess herself (v. 19). In the interpretation proposed by the father, the adjective indicates *atimia*, a technical sense of the term (normally implying deprivation of civic rights) documented in Demosthenes.²⁴⁶ *ἄφωνος* is also used by Demosthenes, although in a non-technical sense, to accuse Aeschines of remaining always silent when the safety of the fatherland is at stake: it is thus a term used in the context of public and political speech.²⁴⁷ Finally, *ἄφωνος* appears

²⁴³ *κράζω* denotes the croaking of ravens, but it is used figuratively for human beings, with negative connotations (loud screams deprived of meaning); cf. Ar. *Equ.* 287; *Vesp.* 103 and 415; *Ach.* 33; *Plut.* 722; and Antiphanes fr. 194 K.–A., 8 (*κεκραγότες*).

²⁴⁴ See also, for a negative characterization of rhetors in Aristophanes, *Equ.* 324–5 (their impudence); 880 (the Paphlagonian bans male prostitution, fearing that the prostitutes may also become rhetors; the same joke already at 425–6); *Plut.* 30, lumping together *ἱερόσυλοι*, *ῥήτορες* | *καὶ συκοφάνται καὶ πονηροί*, and *Plut.* 379 (corruption); Aristoph. *Daitaleis* fr. 205 K.–A. (in the context of a contrast of generations).

²⁴⁵ Short commentary in Olson 2007: 204. See also Eupolis’ *Demoi* fr. 96, and fr. 102 K.–A., stressing the superiority of Pericles to the average run of *rhetores* (the term is repeated twice). Derogatory allusions to rhetors are present also in authors of the *mise*: cf. Alexis, fr. 478 K.–A.; Theophrastus fr. 4 K.–A. (someone asks that a dish of fish that has become cold be taken away, adding ‘I don’t partake of rhetors’, *ῥητόρων οὐ γεύομαι*).

²⁴⁶ Dem. 51. 12 (*On the Trierarchic Crown*): the proponent of an illegal decree, at the third condemnation, is punished with a partial *atimia* and prevented from advising; cf. Hyperides, *C. Phil.* 4. 11 (1. 24. 28–25. 12 Blass), and D. S. 18. 18. 2 (for Demades). Discussion of the legal aspect in Wankel 1991b.

²⁴⁷ Dem. *On the Crown* (18) 191 and 198. The contrast between loquacity, used to abuse the right, and *aphonia* is present already in Ar. *Nub.* 1320: the chorus anticipates that a moment will come when

twice in the speech of Alcidas in *On Those Who Write Written Speeches, or, On Sophists*, at 15 and at 25, in a context in which oral speech is positively contrasted with writing; both times, the term is used to stress the fact that the use of writing implies as a consequence total silence, the loss of expressive means.

As for *λαλεῖν*, the term used by ‘Sappho’ in her solution (the ‘right’ solution) to describe the activity of the letters, its connotations are not always entirely positive—or rather, they may not be negative as long as the context remains a private one; in the public arena, *λαλεῖν* is clearly negative.²⁴⁸ The amplest, most sustained use of the term throughout a play is found in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*. The first hint is in an initial reference by Heracles to the existence of youngsters (*μειρακύλλια*) who might be even greater blabberers (*λαλίστερα*) than Euripides (91). From here onwards, *λαλεῖν* will be used to connote the speech of young men, of women, of sophists, or of Euripides himself, in contrast with Aeschylus and his manly type of tragedy. Thus, Dionysus defines Euripides’ characters as *οἱ νῦν λαλοῦντες* (917), and contrasts them with the long Aeschylean silences (interestingly, however, the example of a silent character picked upon is feminine, Niobe); slightly later (948ff.) Euripides affirms that he taught his characters (and the list comprises the master, but also the mistress, the maiden, the slave, and the brothel-keeper) not to be idle, but to speak; the type of speech he taught them is defined with *λαλεῖν* (954), and in this context the term has markedly negative connotations. This is later picked upon by Aeschylus, who accuses him to have taught *λαλιὰν ἐπιτηδεύσαι καὶ στωμυλάν* (‘to pursue babble and small talk’, 1069); finally, the chorus will use *λαλεῖν* to connote the teachings of Socrates (1492): and in fact, already in the *Clouds* the students of the sophists had been presented as practising small talk (*λαλιὰν ἀσκῆσαι*, *Nub.* 931, cf. *Nub.* 1052).

But the negative connotations of *λαλεῖν* are not limited to Aristophanic comedy. A fragment of Eupolis presents a strong contrast between *λαλεῖν* and *λέγειν*: Phaeax, whose rhetorical abilities apparently did not match those of Alcibiades, was depicted as ‘a prince of talkers, but in speaking most incapable’, *λαλεῖν ἄριστος, ἀδυνατώτατος λέγειν*.²⁴⁹ The same contrast will be used, much later, by Aelius Aristides to describe Pericles as uninterested in small talk, but the best in speaking.²⁵⁰ And while it is true, as pointed out by Dover, that in the fourth century *λαλεῖν* loses some of its negative connotations, becoming the normal word for ‘making conversation’, ‘talking’, nonetheless the term still denotes talk conducted on a private level.²⁵¹ As Antiphanes’ fragment 194 K.–A. clearly inscribes itself in the tradition of abuse of politicians going back to the fifth century, I would

Strepsiades will wish for his son, who has now learnt to successfully defend villainous causes, to be *ἄφρωνος*. But *aphronos* is also used, in a non-technical sense, for those persons who first make noise and then (because of a bribe) refuse to speak, as e.g. in [Dem.] *Against Aristogeiton* (25) 47.

²⁴⁸ See Olson 2007: 167–8 (‘in the fifth century *λαλεῖν* carries a strong sense of subjective disapproval’); and the discussion in Dover 1993: 22.

²⁴⁹ Eupolis fr. 116 K.–A., preserved by Plutarch, *Alc.* 13. 2 (trans. Perrin); cf. Gellius 1. 15. 12.

²⁵⁰ Ael. Arist. 3. 52 (310. 3 L.–B.): *λάλος μὲν ἥκιστα, οἶμαι, λέγειν δὲ ἄριστος εἰκότως ἐνομίζετο*. This is not a quote, but Aelius Aristides uses much material from comedy.

²⁵¹ Dover 1993: 22; Olson 2007: 167–8 ‘in the fourth century it is often merely a colloquial equivalent of *λέγω*’.

argue that it also shares the negative fifth-century connotations of *λαλεῖν* as ‘(useless) chatter’, and possibly feminine chatter.²⁵²

So what can we say of the riddle and of its two solutions? One thing seems fairly clear: Antiphanes reaches back into a long comic tradition, discussing the activity of rhetors in the city.²⁵³ He joins this strand with another tradition, which, for us, is attested at its clearest in the *Palamedes* of Euripides and which is concerned with the respective roles of (epistolary) writing and speech in the polis. The result is typical of comedy, a system where both answers to the riddle point to something which is going wrong: on the one hand, the deafness of the demos in front of the screams of the rhetors vying to appropriate riches; on the other, the silence of a writing which is markedly private (people nearby cannot hear, nor can the letters themselves hear others), feminine, and thus also external to the polis. The ‘father’ in the fragment gives the male, traditional answer, marked by orality and publicity; he identifies in the children of the riddle a bad line of children of the polis, who deal with public affairs in an incorrect way, mixing public and private, and becoming wealthy through their political activity.²⁵⁴ Sappho chooses a female answer—corresponding to the (ideological) female and private connotations of epistolary writing. But her children too are not unproblematic.

In the field built by the riddle, the polis and the rhetors are opposed to the letter and the characters. The latter do pass on a message but, as stated in the riddle, have a dull sense of hearing, that is, they are not able to hear answers, to build a dialogue. The rhetors have a similar problem: they too are marked by a shift of what should be public towards the private in their appropriation of the public wealth, while the demos, who does not see or hear, remains outside a system that it cannot control. The fracture in communication highlighted in the letter is present also among the rhetors who, if caught three times committing *paranomia* (transgressing the law), may indeed lose the right to speak and become *aphonoi*.

Just as the rhetors are here negatively marked, so also epistolary writing is not something positive for the polis—or at any rate, for Athens. But it is important to add that in the case of the rhetors of the fragment from the *Sappho*, we look at a

²⁵² Note that the womanly talk of courtesans is put on a par with that of *demegoroi* (orators, rhetors) in a fragment from an unidentified play of Diphilus (an author of the *nea*), in which a man complains about the unfaithfulness of courtesans: ὄρκος δ’ ἐταίρας ταὐτὸ καὶ δημηγόρου·| ἐκάτερος αὐτῶν ὁμνύει πρὸς ὃν λαλεῖ, ‘A courtesan’s oath is just like a politician’s; they each swear to suit the person they are talking to’ (Diphilus fr. 101 K.–A., trans. Olson).

²⁵³ That Antiphanes and the other poets of the *meise* discussed the activity of the rhetors (and made fun of it) appears from a number of fragments, collected in Athen. 6. 223 D–224 B, that all play on a passage of the speech *On Halonnesus*, singled out by Aeschines in his *On the Crown*, 83 as well. Antiphanes (fr. 167 K.–A.) in particular referred explicitly to Demosthenes; cf. also Plut. *Demosth.* 9. 5.

²⁵⁴ The pregnant letter should be compared with Theognis’ description (39–40) of a pregnant polis that might give birth to a tyrant: Κύρνε, κύει πόλις ἥδε, δέδοικα δὲ μὴ τέκη ἄνδρα | εὐθυντήρα κακῆς ὕβριος ἡμετέρης (see also 1081–2, where the first line is identical, but the second strengthens the tyrannical connotations: ὕβριστήν, χαλεπῆς ἡγεμόνα στάσιος). The text continues with a protest against the lack of distinction between private and public fortunes (οἰκείων κερδῶν εἵνεκα καὶ κράτεος, 46; κέρδεα δημοσίῳ σὺν κακῷ ἐρχομένα, 50). On the polis as sexed entity in comedy see Eupolis’ *Poleis*, with Rosen 1997, and esp. 167–8 for the opposition *metropolis–patris*: Rosen shows that when they are thinking of their civic identity, the Athenians tend to conceptualize their city as *πατρίς* (a term linked to masculine descent), while when considered with respect to the outside world, the city is *μητρόπολις*, mother of other cities, of colonies.

perversion of a situation and of a type of speech that in theory should have positive connotations; along the same lines, the possibility may be left open of positive connotations, in specific instances, of a letter writing that keeps to its proper sphere.

5.2.2. Philemo, fr. 10 K.–A.

A rather enigmatic passage by a comic poet of the *nea*, Philemo, not only confirms that interest in the invention of writing, and on the purposes of such an invention, remained alive, but also offers an interesting angle on it. It must be stated right away that if the text concerns communication at a distance, it is not at all clear that epistolary communication is specifically meant. In fr. 10 K.–A., a short run of iambic trimeters from the play *Apollo* (or possibly the *Exile*), someone (speaking for a group) describes the uses of an invention by an unknown character:

οὐχὶ μόνον οὗτος εἶρε πῶς λαλήσομεν
αὐτοῖς, ἀπεχόντες πολλὸν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων χρόνον,
οὐδ' ὃν τρόπον μηδέποτε μηδὲ εἰς πάλιν
ἐπιλήσεθ' ἡμῶν μηδέν, ἐμβλέψας δέ που
τάκ τοῦ χρόνου τοῦ παντός εἴσεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ
ψυχῆς ἱατρὸν κατέλιπεν τὰ γράμματα.

Not only did he find how we could talk together
being far distant in time from each other,
not only how never again one of us ever will
forget anything, but having a look will know
events of all eternity, but also
as doctors of the soul he left the letters.

The text presents some problems. First, the title: *Apollo* is what the manuscripts of Stobaeus, our source for the fragment, have; the correction *Ἀπολις* (the *Exile*) has been suggested, without any serious grounds.²⁵⁵ It is difficult to see a connection between *Apollo* and these lines, while the use of writing for keeping in touch may sound appealing in a comedy revolving round an exile; yet, as this is the only fragment of the play, it is best to accept that it is not possible to reconstruct the plot, and avoid textual interventionism. Moreover, the fragment does not really discuss the use of writing for keeping in touch over geographical distance. What seems to be at stake in lines 1–2 is rather communication over time (ἀπεχόντες πολλὸν . . . χρόνον), in other words, the preservation of information for later generations, a theme pursued in lines 3–4. Slightly problematic, however, is the fact that lines 1–2 and 3–4 repeat the same concept with variations; and also, the fact that the first person plural of line 1 (λαλήσομεν) and even more the αὐτοῖς of line 2 imply a reciprocity. Hence, attempts have been made at emending the first two lines; but none of the ‘interventionist’ solutions proposed until now appears really satisfying.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ See the apparatus in Kassel–Austin. Caecilius wrote a play *Exsul*, but the two extant fragments cannot be related in any way to this one. The same applies to the one fragment of Alexis’ *Phygas*.

²⁵⁶ Thus instead of πολλὸν . . . χρόνον of l. 2, πολλὸν . . . τόπον and πολὺ γ’ . . . χρόνος have been suggested; cf. the apparatus in Kassel and Austin. The first person plural λαλήσομεν given by the manuscript S (a correction of λαλήσω) is justified by the presence at l. 4 of a first person plural pronoun, ἡμῶν and by the metre; the manuscripts A have λαλήσεται or λαλήσετε. αὐτοῖς is a correction of Meineke, universally accepted, for the αὐτοῖς of the codices. But it makes sense only if we imagine

As writing is clearly central here, it has been suggested that the inventor should be identified with Prometheus or Palamedes, or, less plausibly, with Cadmus. The invention of writing is praised on three counts: writing allows a discussion between persons who are distant in time; it is a remedy for forgetfulness; and it can cure the soul. While the first two aspects are fairly traditional (and can be reduced to one, permanency of written texts through the ages), the last one is untraditional and new. Unluckily, the fragmentary nature of the text makes it difficult to know how exactly writing was envisioned to cure the soul: in the form of a letter from the absent beloved? But there is no hint of her. By means of a message from the friends left behind by the exile? That requires emendation of the title. Or by writing acting as a mediator of wisdom, as in the inscription that according to Hecataeus of Abdera adorned the sacred library of Egyptian Thebes (D.S. 1. 49. 2: *ψυχῆς ἰατρεῖον*, 'Healing-place of the soul')?

At the level of terminology, the choice of *λαλεῖν* for the type of exchange that it will be possible to establish thanks to the good deeds of the discoverer points to a type of language often marked as private and female: Philemo builds on the traditional elements that we have seen at play in Antiphanes' *Sappho*, but orients his reflection differently. It is at any rate clear that the action of writing here is placed entirely in a personal sphere: *λαλήσομεν* strikes the first note, with its connotation of comfortable small talk; the *ἐμβλέψας δέ που*, 'having a look', points to reading—possibly even silent reading, since the visual aspect is here strongly underlined; in the same direction goes the mention of the soul at the end.²⁵⁷

5.3. CONCLUSION

It is time to attempt some conclusions. References to writing and written documents concern all sort of spaces, from the public and official to the personal and private; they appear ubiquitously, especially in comedy, which is free from the restraints on tragedy dictated by the necessity to avoid anachronisms. Such references attest to the widespread diffusion of writing, at least in an Athenian milieu, but also to an intense reflection on its uses. For practical reasons, each of the great tragedians of the fifth century has been discussed separately in what is the canonical order; a different group of fragments, some tragic, some satyric, others comic, all presenting very specific characteristics, has been then tackled on its own, and has prepared the way for the discussion of the presence of letters on the comic stage, which also relies mainly on fragmentary texts. On the whole, this order reflects, very roughly, a chronological order, allowing us to follow allusions and references to writing and letter writing in drama from c.470 to c.250. Mapping

conversation among members of a group, over geographical distance. The transmitted *αὐτοῖς* could be maintained, notwithstanding the following *ἀλλήλων*, if we imagine that the invention allows the group to speak to some other group (posterity) mentioned earlier in the text.

²⁵⁷ Note that a fragment of a *Palamedes* attributed to Philemo survives, fr. 60 K.-A., preserved by Stobaeus—but it does not look like a comic fragment; a number of critics have suggested Euripides' *Palamedes* (cf. the apparatus of Kassel and Austin, and Euripides fr. 585 Kannicht). The most likely explanation is that the passage of Philemo and the heading of the following passage in Stobaeus, with reference to Euripides, may have fallen out in the process of textual transmission. A letter figures also in a fragment from an uncertain play of Philemo, fr. 132 K.-A.; see above, 243.

changes over time is difficult, however, since what we have is only a minimal portion of the overall production of plays and since many of the plays are not dated, or only conjecturally so. As we shall see, there is no 'unitary' view of writing: in most cases, the context within which the reference appears orients the interpretation.

The image of writing on the tablets of the mind had been used as a metaphor for permanent, strong recollection in Aeschylus and Sophocles (and before them in Pindar).²⁵⁸ The metaphor will reappear in the *Theaetetus* as one of the explanations for perception and will have a long history.²⁵⁹ Seen from the point of the support (one's own mind), this is obviously a very personal, and often secretive, writing; but it need not be so, as the instances of its use by Dike and Hades show. How should this metaphor be evaluated? In most of the Aeschylean and Sophoclean passages that employ the metaphor, the result is indeed an accurate remembrance; but the further development of the metaphorical imagery of writing, such as the writing of oaths on water (or ashes, or wine, as in comedy) points to the untrustworthiness of similar metaphorical writings.²⁶⁰ And that is indeed the way in which the writing in the mind had been presented in its earliest appearance, in Pindar's *Olympian* 10. There, the text written in the mind, although still present, had been forgotten: it needed a Muse to read it out and to make it reach its addressee. As Segal puts it, 'By the playful figure of an invisible writing, Pindar is asserting that the oral *kleos* is more reliable a memorial than the written word.'²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ The earliest datable instance of this metaphor is in Pindar (*Olympian* 10. 1–3, an ode composed some time after a victory in 476 BC); the metaphor then turns up in Sophocles' *Triptolemus* (468 BC?), in *Suppliants* (463 BC), and *Oresteia* (458 BC), in the *Prometheus Vincit*, and again in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and in the *Philoctetes* (409 BC). The Dike fragment, if connected with the *Aitnaiai*, would provide an instance as early as Pindar's, since that play celebrated the foundation of Aetna by Hieron in 476; but this is very hypothetical. I accept here the traditional date for Aeschylus' *Suppliants*; but see Scullion 2002 for a much earlier date (c.475 BC).

²⁵⁹ Plato, *Theaet.* 191 c–192 d; for the later fortune of the metaphor, see Draaisma (2000: 24–48). That the wax tablet of the mind is a gift of Mnemosyne (*Theaet.* 191 d) ties in well with the fact that in Greek tradition the purpose of the invention of writing is memory, rather than communication: see above, ch. 3. Plato must have had in mind here the extraordinary passage from Aristophanes' *Clouds*, in which Strepsiades proposes to melt from afar through a crystalline stone the wax of the tablet so as to avoid a suit (Ar. *Nub.* 770–2: ὁπότε γράφουτο τὴν δίκην ὁ γραμματεὺς, | ἄπωτέρω στὰς ὧδε πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον | τὰ γράμματα' ἐκτίξαιμι τῆς ἐμῆς δίκης;). The verb used, ἐκτίκω, is also used in the *Prometheus Vincit* by the chorus for the fading of memory, in order to express their decision (PV 535: ἀλλὰ μοι τόδ' ἐμμένοι καὶ μήποτ' ἐκτακείη), and in Critias B 6 (= Athen. 10. 432 D), λήστις δ' ἐκτίκει μνημοσύνην παραπίδων, a forgetfulness induced by excessive potations. The inverted metaphor (eating the wax of the tablet and thus forgetting; but in the comic context this probably was presented as reality and not metaphor) appears in Aristophanes fr. 163 K.–A., from the *Gerytades*: τὴν μάλθαν ἐκ τῶν γραμματείων ἤσθιον, 'They ate the wax from their writing-tablets', possibly, as hypothesized by Bergk, said of ambassadors who out of greed (or hunger, as Kassel and Austin suggest) had eaten the wax of the tablets that they were supposed to carry.

²⁶⁰ One may contrast statements emphasizing the ability to remember of persons ignorant of writing, as in Cratinus fr. 128 K.–A., from the *Nomoi*: ἀλλὰ μὰ Δι' οὐκ οἶδ' ἔγωγε γράμματα' οὐδ' ἐπίσταμαι, | ἀλλ' ἀπὸ γλώττης φράσω σοι μνημονεύω γὰρ καλῶς, to be interpreted, following Kaibel, as the answer of someone who has been asked to read a passage of Homer or Solon, and who answers saying that he does not know the letters, but remembers.

²⁶¹ Pind. *Ol.* 10, 1–6: 'The Olympic victor read me (ἀνάγνωτέ μοι), the son of Archestratus, where it has been written in my mind (πόθι φρονὸς ἐμᾶς γέγραπται). For I owed him a sweet song, and I have forgotten (ἐπιλάθω). But you, Muse, and the daughter of Zeus, unforgetting Truth (Ἀλάθεια), with a hand that puts things right, keep from me the blame for lying, which wrongs a friend', with Segal 1985: 212; the poem is analyzed at 210–12. See also Ford 2002: 118–19 and n. 25.

Interestingly, with Euripides metaphorical writing in the mind disappears, and 'solid' writing becomes, in a very positive sense, the guardian of common memory and oaths against the practice of simply 'remembering', as in the elaborate finale of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. This writing receives a peculiar 'added value': from the support on which it is engraved (a bronze tripod of Heracles, left to Theseus), from the ritual that accompanies the oath taking and the engraving, and from the status of the location where the support and text are finally dedicated, Delphi. Another form of 'solid' writing, attested in tragedy only in Euripides, is the epigram (found in *Troades*, 415 BC, and in *Phoenician Women*, c.410 BC). The presence of epigrams in tragedy is obviously linked to a reflection on forms of commemoration. Their writtenness, as against the 'spoken' epigrams also attested (e.g. in the *Alcestis*, 438 BC), may be explained by the desire to underline the shocking character of these epigrams, whose content is impossible to utter—these are epigrams that will not be written.

Besides these traces of a reflection on memory, commemoration, and writing, we find also references to official documents of the polis, such as laws, decrees, and official lists. References to such documents are rather infrequent in Aeschylus: they are alluded to in his *Suppliants* (463 BC?) as something foreign (even sealed), and as a foil for the 'real thing', the free public word from a free mouth, while the reference in one of Aeschylus' fragments to a *grammateus* (in a comparison: fr. 358 Radt) simply attests to the mediated presence of official writing. In Sophocles, too, official writing figures only in a limited way: through the allusion in *Antigone* (c.442 BC?) to unwritten laws, which somehow must imply written laws; and through the references to a 'real' list (metaphorical writing in the mind had been used for lists too), in the *Achaion syllogos* (fr. 144 Radt). In Euripides, discussion of this type of writing acquires a remarkable importance. For Theseus (*Suppliant Women*, c.423 BC?) written laws guarantee equality, in a positive sense; Hecuba (*Hecuba*, c.424 BC) had highlighted their negative aspect. These very different ways of viewing the same type of writing depend not on writing itself (it equalizes in both instances, from above or from below), but on the perspective of the play as a whole, and on that of the speaking character. Both points of view can be shared: problematizing concepts is after all one of the hallmarks of tragedy, and a number of plays respond to each other in an intertextual discourse, which becomes a kind of commentary on the Athenian polis and its culture. Comedy enters fully into this discourse, and if most of the references to writing in comedy have to do with lawsuits, the writing of laws and decrees is also mentioned more than once, again with ambivalent effects: decrees are on sale, but they are also used to give authority; the very stelae on which they were engraved are mentioned, and at the same time made little of, as an item against which one may lean and relieve oneself; oracles are on sale, or brought on stage in boxes, to give a solid foundation to some (usually wildly implausible) great enterprise; in the *Women at the Assembly*, the 'letter of the law' is cited to support equality—in the sharing of men by old and young women.²⁶²

²⁶² Inscribed stelae as part of everyday conversation: Ar. *Lys.* 513; relieving oneself against a stela: Ar. *Av.* 1050–4; for the other references, see above, 242 and n. 197, and Slater 1996.

Another aspect that seems to have excited interest is the relationship of painting/*graphe* and reality. Aeschylus and Euripides make important use of *γραφή* for pictorial images; the fact that this use is not attested in the extant oeuvre of Sophocles may or may not depend on the hazards of transmission. Most instances fall into one of the two following categories: either the reference to the image is made in such a way as to call attention to its status as an image, provoking what Froma Zeitlin has defined as ‘hyperviewing’, or auditive and visual data are paired as sources of information. Pointing to images *qua* images, in a medium such as drama that relies not only on sounds, as had been the case for epic performance, but also heavily upon the visual (actors and gestures, stage setting, props), brings the audience as close as can be to a rupture of dramatic illusion (notice, for instance, Aeschylus’ *Theoroi*), but at the same time forces consideration of the status of the image in question. Tragedy (especially Aeschylus and Euripides) thus pursues the reflection on the way images function, including explicit comparisons of images to song, attested already from the end of the sixth century by Simonides.²⁶³ The remarkable power of images is evident in Aeschylus’ *Theoroi* and *Agamemnon* (where the references to images had also served the purpose of linking together the characters of Iphigenia, Agamemnon, and Cassandra); the best Euripidean instance is that of Hecuba asking to be viewed as a painting, in the play that bears her name. In general, the use of the term *graphe* for an image has the effect of calling attention to its artificial character;²⁶⁴ the power of this depiction resides in the fact that painted images are enhanced, crafted representations of reality (this has not to do with realism, but with the fact that an image may mean much more than its simple primary referent). Images (just as written words) speak, in Aeschylus as in Euripides. And yet, already in the *Agamemnon*, Cassandra’s reflection on the ease with which images can be wiped off had hinted at the instability—of images, of writing, and of men—an instability stressed in Euripides too, for instance in a fragment of the *Peleus*.²⁶⁵

As for the pairing of auditive and visual data as sources of information, this is a specifically Euripidean feature.²⁶⁶ It produces less complex effects, but is no less interesting: in most cases, seeing and hearing are treated as exactly parallel, and as

²⁶³ See for Simonides the careful discussion of Ford 2002: 93–112. For tragedy, Segal 1993; Zeitlin 1994; O’Sullivan 2000; Steiner 2001: 44–56; and Wright 2005: 318–25. A similar reflection on the relationship between image, reality, and writing was being developed by the vase-painters: see above, 186–7.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Empedocles, 31 B 23 D.–K.: *γραφεῖς* mix drugs to form images resembling all things (*εἰδέα παῖσιν ἀλίγκια*), with Segal 1993: 100–1.

²⁶⁵ Segal 1993: 101 suggestively states that ‘For Euripides’ contemporaries, the art of “inscription”, *graphike* [Segal is here talking of paintings] embodies an ambiguous and paradoxical relation between surface and depth’, referring to Empedocles (above), Gorgias (*Helen* 18), and Socrates in Xen. *Mem.* 3. 10. 1 (*graphike* is the figuration of visible things’, *γραφικὴ ἐστὶν εἰκασία τῶν ὁρωμένων*). Comedy will also pursue this discourse: cf. the plays *Γραφή* by Alexis (its fr. 41 K.–A. tells of a man from Samos who fell in love with a marble statue, so possibly the protagonist fell in love with a painting; same topic in Philemo fr. 127 *incertae fabulae* K.–A.); *Ζωγράφος* (‘Painter’) by Antiphanes (see fr. 102 K.–A.), Diphilus, and Hipparchus; *Ζωγράφοις* (‘Painters’) by Anaxandrides; and *Pictores* by Pomponius.

²⁶⁶ Note, however, the ‘inscriptions’ on the shields of Aeschylus’ *Seven* (467 BC): there, writing had been used in the context of a messenger’s report, in synaesthetic combination with other communicative codes, the overall message being the result of the various pairings of codes.

having the same value. This *prima facie* runs counter to the traditional position of privileging the view (*ὄψις*) over the oral report (*ἀκοή*), a position attested for instance in Heraclitus (fr. 101a D.–K.: ‘for the eyes are more precise witnesses than the ears’, *ὀφθαλμοὶ γὰρ τῶν ὤτων ἀκριβέστεροι μάρτυρες*). The privileging of the visual over the aural/auditive is also present in the prose of Herodotus, Thucydides, the sophists, and is important in the context of the contemporary Athenian judicial system. Yet, as is clear from many of the Euripidean passages, ‘seeing’ the painted image, or seeing the writing, cannot be (and will never be) considered as equivalent to ‘seeing the thing’, as a form of *ὄψις*, because information transmitted through writing is mediated communication.²⁶⁷ Hence, its pairing on the same level with *akoe*, as another instance of mediated communication. Behind this is clearly a lively a debate on knowledge, and on how it can be best attained; but this is also obviously relevant to epistolary communication.

Critical examination of writing and its role in society also involves oracular collections, i.e. the writing down of the god’s voice, and more generally, books. Books are very frequently mentioned in comedy, and appear also more than once in Euripides. If they have managed to infiltrate tragedy, they must by now be a relatively important presence in Athenian society. Twice in the *Hippolytus* (428 BC) books are mentioned that are certainly not operating in a direction conforming to the ideals of the polis, first in the words of the nurse to Phaedra, and then in those with which Theseus insults Hippolytus.²⁶⁸ But otherwise, books are not marked negatively: rather, they are presented as complementary to song, as parallel to oral traditions. This is the case in the *Erechtheus*, as well as in the *Alcestris*, the earliest surviving play by Euripides (438 BC), and in the *Iphigenia in Aulis* (performed in 405 BC, after Euripides’ death). There may be a hint of the metatheatrical in these references to books, for drama relied on scripts;²⁶⁹ Euripides’ particular fondness for writing was not lost on Aristophanes, who in *Frogs* had Euripides say that, when he inherited the art of tragedy from Aeschylus, he took out the inflammation from it and ‘added extracts of fluencies filtered out of papyri’ (943; cf. also 1407–10: Euripides can put his papyri on the scale, where he will still prove lighter than two lines of Aeschylus). It is, however, worth noting

²⁶⁷ Segal’s excellent discussion (1993: 101) of view and sound in the *Hippolytus* is marred by the fact that he does not distinguish clearly enough between view of facts or objects, i.e. direct view, and mediated view; hence, his stress falls on the eye-ear asymmetries, rather than, as here, on their symmetry. His conclusion at 150, that ‘autopsy, which in the fifth century thinkers regard as the surest and clearest proof, is here [in the *Hippolytus*] deceptive’, can be accepted only with the proviso that in the *Hippolytus* viewing (the viewing of a *graphe*) is not direct viewing: this is why it can be paired to hearing.

²⁶⁸ Books may be similarly connoted in comedy: cf. Aristophanes fr. 506 K.–A., ‘This man, either a book has ruined him, or Prodicus, or some babblers’, or the third-century comic poet Theognetus, fr. 1 K.–A.: οἷον μὲν ὁ δαίμων φιλοσόφῳ συνώκισεν. | ἐπαρίστερ’ ἔμαθες, ὦ πόνηρε, γράμματα· | ἀνέστροφέν σου τὸν βίον τὰ βιβλία. But there are also numerous books that turn out to be simply cooking manuals, or that are not supposed to have a negative effect on the reader.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Hall 2006: 46 for the discovery at Daphne (south of Athens, along the road to Sounion) of a tomb dated to c.430–420 BC, in which a roll (the oldest known Greek papyrus), a lyre, a harp, a pair of auloi, a bronze pen and tablets accompanied the burial of a man, possibly an actor or a singer. The papyrus roll and the tablets have been now published in West 2013; for the archaeological context and the other objects see the papers in *Greek and Roman Musical Studies* 1 (2013). See also the Attic hydria and the volute-crater discussed above, 183–4 and nn. 2–4.

that the terminology used in Euripides is non-specific: tablets (*σανίς*, *δέλτος*), leather skins (*διφθέρας*—this is possibly the most specific word), or ‘writings’ (*γράμματα*): *βύβλος*/*βίβλος* is not attested in what is extant of either Sophocles or Euripides, nor any word formed from that stem; in Aeschylus, *βύβλος* (*Suppl.* 948) is used for a type of writing marked as oriental, and is unlikely to mean ‘book’. Comedy will use *βιβλίον* unproblematically, possibly already with Cratinus, certainly with Eupolis and Aristophanes; as we have just seen, in *Frogs* Aeschylus offers to weigh two of his verses against Euripides, his wife, his children, Cephisophon, and all his books (*βιβλία*, 1409).²⁷⁰

In general, books are connected to specific individuals, and are mentioned for the effect they have on them (or the connotations they convey); fairly personal is also the writing down of oracles, individually, or as collections, since the oracle, once written, can be stored for later reuse by individuals. A tablet with the oracular pronouncements of the Dodonaean oak plays a prominent role in the *Trachiniae*. A reference to a written oracular collection is in Euripides (fr. 627 Kannicht). Both historiography and comedy show that already the Pisistratids had treasured written collections of oracles, and Herodotus presents the writing down of the Delphic answers by people consulting the oracle as normal practice. It is thus not surprising to find this kind of text in drama. Nor can the ambiguity of the oracle be imputed to the medium (the writing), even if it is true that the audience of *Trachiniae* may have left the theatre with a dim view of writing and its uses.

Finally, letters. These are definitely a personal type of writing. If we look at epistolary writing against the background of the other types of writing, it becomes immediately apparent that there is here an imbalance, both at the chronological level, and, more importantly, in terms of quality. To tackle the chronology first. Although the opening of the *Oresteia* (458 BC), with its description of the light signals arranged by Clytaemestra, had shown a profound attention towards language and communication, the first clear reference to a letter is in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (428 BC); but from this moment onwards, a number of letters figure in what is extant of Euripides. If we turn to comedy, for the fifth century we have one possible reference to epistolary communication in Cratinus’ *Trophonius*, and the parody of the *Palamedes* in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousae*. The situation changes in the fourth and third century, when letters play an important role in the plots, at least if we are to judge from the titles. This may have to do with the hazards of transmission; more reliable is the second aspect, quality. While more-or-less casual references to writing are scattered in numerous plays throughout the fifth century, there are no casual references to letters. Letters are not mentioned

²⁷⁰ Cratinus 267 K.–A. (*βιβλαγράφος* refers probably to a sycophant active in the writing of decrees, cf. Caroli 2012); Eupolis fr. 327 K.–A.; Ar. Av. 1288. Turner 1975 is a landmark study of the circulation of books in fifth-century Athens, although some of its conclusions (especially that the books circulating would have been mainly those of the sophists, in prose, 23–4) cannot be accepted *sic et simpliciter*; the ‘books’ referred to in Euripides at any rate are all ‘poetry’ (but then they probably would be); comedy has references, difficult to evaluate, to books of both poetry and prose (on comedy and books, Caroli 2012). See also Pfeiffer 1968: 22–30 (optimistic); O’Sullivan 1996, stressing that the sophists in their attempt to present their prose as the ‘successor to the poetry of traditional Greek culture’ had to ‘adopt the book as their symbol’ (117, with reference to e.g. Ar. fr. 506 K.–A., mentioned in n. 268 above); a very balanced, thoughtful assessment in Ford 2002: 152–7.

for the sake of a gesture towards 'reality'; no character idly thinks of sending a letter. When a letter is mentioned, it plays an active role in the intrigue.

In Euripides in particular, letters do not have only a communicative purpose, they are central elements in the plot. They may help push the action forward, or also slow it down, as with the recognition scene in the *Iphigenia in Aulis*; they may be used to bridge situations in which a direct encounter is not possible or desirable.²⁷¹ They are thus an 'active' type of writing, as opposed to the other types, mentioned but not 'used'. Letters may also constitute an interesting scenic, visual prop. Moreover, bringing letters to the stage allows the playwright to pursue the exploration of narrative techniques, to play with intention, delayed communication, realization, to bring in touch a time past and a time future. But also, the use of letters makes a subtle characterization of the protagonists possible: the characters that write letters are those that are not in a position to have a face-to-face, open confrontation because of their geographical situation, or that choose not to have such a confrontation because their intents are not acceptable to the wider community. Since they do not want to (or cannot) remain inactive or yield, they choose epistolary means. This applies to Phaedra, to Stheneboea and Proetus, to Odysseus deviously plotting against Palamedes, to Iphigenia, who, from her captivity in Tauris, has no choice but to resort to a letter, and to Agamemnon, who cannot face telling Clytaemestra (or the army) the truth. While there are nuances, and while it is the plot as a whole that inflects the connotation of the letter, it is the case that in the majority of the situations epistolary exchanges are negatively marked.

From Euripides, letters move into comedy, and in two ways that correspond to the two main purposes they had had in Euripides' plays. On the one hand, they become elements of the plot, and all the more naturally, since letters from the fourth century onwards indeed begin to circulate more and more abundantly. Here, the numerous plays bearing a title '*Epistole*' or '*Epistolai*' are relevant; even if we cannot know how letters functioned within these plays, the Plautine renditions may give us an idea. On the other hand, references to letters in comedy serve to prolong a reflection on public speaking, public writing, and their respective uses within the polis, of which we may have some scant remains going back to fifth-century comedy in the stories concerning the epistolary greeting used by Cleon for his official communication after Sphacteria. Such a reflection remains very much alive throughout the fourth century, both in comedy and outside it. In comedy, it is best exemplified by the riddle of Antiphanes' *Sappho*. In the next chapter, we shall look more closely at how the letters and speeches of the rhetors interacted on the Athenian political and legal scene.

²⁷¹ Rosenmeyer 2001: 65: the letters become 'agents in the plot, provoking reactions and directing events kinetically'.

Letters on the Legal and Political Stage

According to many scholars, the transition from the fifth to the fourth century constitutes a watershed in terms of literacy (at least in an Athenian context), with an apparent increase in interest in documents and their preservation. Starting with the late fifth century, Attic orators, for example, cite documents and laws codified in writing as part of the evidence. But a compelling case has been made that archives of some kind existed in Athens even earlier and that we should reckon with a fairly widespread, and ever increasing, use of writing throughout the fifth century.¹ How do letters, as a specific type of written document, fit into this picture?

From the mid-fifth century onwards, so Pébarthe has recently argued, the 'letter' becomes the accepted and customary instrument for communicating at a distance. Thus, in a discussion of the letters mentioned by the orators in the course of their speeches, he remarks: 'dans cette deuxième moitié du cinquième siècle, la correspondance écrite est banale'.² Some later texts may seem to bear this assertion out: for instance, a passage from the Apollodoran speech *Against Timotheus*, delivered at some time in the late 360s, but referring here to the situation of Athens in the year 373 BC, may be understood as presenting oral messages and letters in parallel, as the two ways in which information concerning the army could be conveyed home: publicly, through a report in the assembly, and privately, through letters by each individual to his family.³

And yet, Pébarthe's is probably an excessively optimistic view of the situation, and would need qualification, at least from a chronological perspective. A very different assessment of the situation has been made by Sian Lewis, who suggests that 'personal communication through writing letters never became common in

¹ e.g. Sickinger 1999 for the archives; Pébarthe 2006 for literacy (against the more conservative vision of Harris 1989, Thomas 1989). Excellent discussion of the way literacy and orality are integrated in Athens (and in the early Greek world) in Faraguna 2006; Faraguna 2007 focuses on the interplay of literacy and orality in legal situations.

² Pébarthe 2006: 81–4 and 86. He bases this claim on a disputable analysis of early 'letters' on ceramic and lead from Athens (see above, 44); and on Antiphon 5. 53–6 (discussed below).

³ [Dem.] 49. 13: 'those who came from the army were reporting before the assembly (ἀπαγγελλόντων ἐν τῷ δήμῳ) the distress and need that existed, and at the same time individuals kept receiving word/letters from their relatives and friends (δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἐκάστου πυνθανομένου παρὰ τῶν οἰκείων καὶ ἐπιτηδείων) telling of their plight'. Note, however, that δι' ἐπιστολῶν is ambiguous: while L. Gernet (*Démosthène. Plaidoyers civils*, iii (Paris, 1959)) translates 'connaissaient la situation par des lettres de parents et d'amis', A. T. Murray (*Demosthenes: Private Orations*, ii (Cambridge, MA, 1939)) assumes it to mean 'through messages', since he translates: 'kept receiving word'. The problem is the ambiguity inherent in ἐπιστέλλω/ἐπιστολή; but on the whole, by the fourth century BC ἐπιστολή seems indeed to mean 'letter' rather than 'injunction' or 'oral message'.

Classical Greece' because written messages were not felt to be 'trustworthy enough'.⁴ The practicalities of sending a letter in the ancient Greek world are the main reason behind Lewis's position.⁵ And yet notwithstanding these difficulties, letters were possibly a relatively common instrument of communication between individuals already in the late fifth century BC, and certainly so from the fourth century onwards. The fourth century is indeed the moment in which epistolography develops in a massive way, as references to letters in literary sources indicate. If everyday letters from Greece appear to us to be almost non-existent, this is simply because papyrus, the material on which they were written, has not survived the test of time in Greece; by contrast, we have an enormous amount of correspondence of all types from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt.⁶ Letters were thus certainly used as a means of communication between individuals. What of official communications?

Some Athenian decrees mention letters sent to the Council and the People by foreign kings and dynasts;⁷ the *corpus Demosthenicum* shows that Demosthenes could produce as evidence a number of official letters, which would have been taken from the Metroon and read out by a clerk. About a half of the letters mentioned by Demosthenes were sent by Philip of Macedon, to whom tradition attributes an extensive use of letter writing for diplomatic purposes, as well as the institution of an official chancery at least from 343 BC, when Eumenes was nominated as γραμματεὺς or secretary (Plut. *Eum.* 1. 2–3; Nepos *Eum.* 1). Alexander continued in the footsteps of his father. Some of the letters he sent to the Greek cities were published on stone by the cities themselves, as in the case of Chios and Priene (Syll.³ 283 and OGIS 1=Rhodes and Osborne nos. 84 and 86). Others, such as the letter concerning the return of the exiles (D. S. 18. 8. 4), enjoyed an ample diffusion in Greece and entered the literary tradition; yet more are known only through passing references in literary sources, such as the letter sent to the Athenians in 335 BC ordering them to hand over the leaders of the anti-Macedonian party (Arr. *Anab.* 1. 10. 4), Alexander's request to the Athenians for ships (Plut. *Phoc.* 21. 1), and the letter sent to the Plataeans stating that he would rebuild their city (Plut. *Alex.* 34. 1). From this time onwards, letters are the normal instrument of diplomatic communication of the Hellenistic kings.⁸

⁴ Lewis 1996: 142 and 152. See also—on different grounds—Sykutris 1931: 217.

⁵ See on this 10–13 above.

⁶ For Egypt (and women) see Criboire 2001; Bagnall and Criboire 2006. For fourth-century Greece, compare Aristotle's remarks on the likelihood that Iphigenia would want to send a letter (*Poet.* 1455^a 16–19), discussed above, 230.

⁷ Rhodes 1972: 43 n. 7 refers to Tod 133 = Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 33, a honorific decree for Dionysius I of Syracuse and his son, dated to 368 BC, in which a letter (περὶ τῶν γραμμάτων, l. 8) sent by Dionysius to Athens is mentioned; Tod 167 = Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 64, an honorific decree for Spartocus, Paerisades, and Apollonius, dated to 346 BC, in which a message (περὶ ὧν ἐπέστειλε) sent by Spartocus and Paerisades is mentioned, together with the ampler exposition by the ambassadors; IG ii², 387 (grant of citizenship dated to 319 BC, mentioning in the motivation clause a message sent by Polyperchon, [. . . περὶ ὧν Πτολμύρχων ἐπέ[σ]- | [ταλκεν, ll. 8–9); and IG ii², 486 (grant of citizenship dated to 304/303 BC, alluding to a message: περὶ ὧν ὁ βασιλ[η]- | εὺς ἐπέστειλεν τεῖ [βουλεῖ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ], ll. 11–12). Only the first instance, however, refers explicitly to a letter or written text; the other texts all have simply a form of ἐπιστέλλω. See also Pébarthe 2006: 293 n. 17.

⁸ The letters of Philip will be discussed below. Demosthenes cites passages relatively often: cf. 9. 27; 18. 39, 77–8, 157, 166, 167; 19. 38, 40, 51, 161, 187) or refers to them (cf. 2. 7; 4. 37; 7. 1, 27, 32–3; 8. 16;

Philip and Alexander's letters exemplify a particular type of official writing. They are royal letters, originating from the Macedonian chancery and reflecting the will of an individual, the king. In this sense, although they address 'the many', they are close to private letters. Akin to the royal letters from this point of view are those that we might call 'open letters', letters of specific individuals who had apologetic or political purposes, such as some of the Isocratean letters and the Demosthenic ones; for this type of writing, too, the fourth century marks a decisive change.⁹

Things are not so clear-cut with letters and poleis. At the level of interstate diplomacy, very little is known; but the impression is that most affairs were discussed orally through embassies (ambassadors could of course request letters that might facilitate their mission, as Hegesias of Lampsakos did in c.195 BC). A certain reluctance to inscribe (and thus confer a monumental format on) the writings of another state or polis within one's own polis can be discerned even for non-epistolary writings (excluding, of course, honorific decrees).¹⁰ This, however, does not mean that writings were not received, simply that they were kept in the archives rather than publicized. Similarly, although we do not have epigraphical trace of them, letters appear to have been the normal means with which *strategoí* on campaign or ambassadors on a mission would communicate, at least from the fourth century onwards, with the polis. This emerges clearly from a passage of the *Athenaion politeia*, stating that out of the four monthly assembly meetings, two should be dedicated to dealing 'with all other business, at which the laws prescribe that three cases of sacred matters are to be dealt with, three audiences for heralds and embassies, and three cases of secular matters', and further specifying that

προέρχονται δὲ καὶ οἱ κήρυκες καὶ οἱ πρέσβεις τοῖς πρυτάνεσιν πρῶτον, καὶ οἱ τὰς ἐπιστολὰς φέροντες τούτοις ἀποδιδοῦσι. [...] ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 43. 6)

heralds and ambassadors meet the prytaneis first, and the bearers of dispatches give them to these.

11. 1, 17; 12. 22; 18. 221; 19. 36, with Lewis 1996: 146–7. One such letter even entered the Demosthenic corpus ([D] XII). The bibliography on Alexander's letters is huge. For the false ones, which will be one of the main sources of the Romance of Alexander, see Merkelbach 1954: 1–5 and 32–55; Rosenmeyer 2001: 171–92. On Alexander's chancery, Berve 1926: i, 42–54. Collection of letters of Hellenistic kings: Welles 1934. Kienast 1973a suspects a Persian influence behind the choice of this mode of communication.

⁹ Isocrates' letters: Nicolai 2004: 120–7. Demosthenic letters: Clavaud 1987: 3–68; Goldstein 1968, who believes in the authenticity of the first four. The apologetic nature of the open letter in the fourth century is well brought out by Goldstein (1968: 97–132); these letters can be classified as *litterae negotiales*, a genre recognized as such by ancient theorists, who connected them with oratory (cf. Demetr. *Eloc.* 234: 'Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ πόλεσιν καὶ βασιλεύσιν γράφομεν ἔστωσαν τοιαῦται αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μικρὸν ἐξηρμῆναι πως). However, the ancient open letter was usually addressed to a foreigner, or a citizen residing outside the polis, not directly to the public; and it concerned general matters rather than specific ones (Goldstein 1968: 99). The Demosthenic letters are in this respect an exception, due to the situation arising out of the orator's exile.

¹⁰ Hegesias: see above, 169. Covering letters: see below, 312–15 and n. 49. A simple administrative letter, besides its primary function of solving a problem or imposing a decision, will publicize the authority from which it emanates, if monumentalized on stone; the propaganda value may sometimes be more important than the content of the text itself. Hence the natural reluctance of Greek poleis towards admitting the writings of the 'other' in their centre. See Bertrand 1985: 107–8; Funck 1996: 199–210; Ma 1999: 147–9.

Outside Athens, allusions to letters in literary texts, or for instance the mention, in the Lindian chronicle, of letters sent by the Rhodian priests Gorgosthenes and Hierobulus to the Rhodian boule and to the Lindian *mastroi* respectively, describing the objects that had been dedicated to the goddess Athena in Lindos, show that letters were among the accepted instruments of internal communication in most Greek poleis.¹¹

Thus, it is important to differentiate sharply between official and personal communication; between different modes of official communication (e.g. from one polis to another or between a polis and one of its magistrates); and between various types of letters and occasions—all the while keeping in mind the issue of the public monumentalization of pieces of correspondence, as opposed to their simple preservation in archives.

In this chapter, I shall try to map out the connotations of these epistolary types through a detailed analysis of the letters (or mentions of letters) preserved within the corpus of the Attic orators.¹² The reasons for this choice are multiple. In the first place, working on a homogeneous corpus of deliberative and forensic speeches preserving various types of documents (decrees, laws, and letters) may help highlight the specificity of letter writing in relation to other forms of writing. Secondly, with the speeches of the orators we are at the interface of orality and writing, in more than one sense.¹³ The speeches were delivered orally, and were meant to give the impression of being composed on the spur of the moment, but were in most cases prepared. Yet the documents were read out by a clerk, and this shift from the orator to the clerk, creating a break, will have enhanced the written status of the documents.¹⁴ At the same time, letters remain very close to oral communication: they are a (formalized) speech, in which the person of the sender is very markedly present.¹⁵ It may not be an accident that the first collection of 'literary letters' is probably that of Lysias; and that in the work of Isocrates there is

¹¹ The use of letters in the Hellenistic period, as implied by the narratives of ancient historians, is discussed in ch. 4; as for the Lindian chronicle, see *FGrH/BNJ* 532 F 2, 5–9, with the commentary of Higbie, *ad loc.* The opening of the text, reporting the decision to inscribe the list of all objects 'from the letters and from the public records' ([ἐπ]ιστολὰν καὶ τῶν χρηματισμῶν), F 1 lines 6–7, implies, however, a distinction; and the fact that the letters concern the most ancient objects, while the public records refer to more recent donations, attests to the generalized perception of the increasing value of documentation (cf. Higbie, *ad loc.*). The letters of the priests may have been connected with the destruction of the temple by a fire, in 392 or 391 BC: see again Higbie, *ad BNJ* 532 F 2, 5–9.

¹² I will follow the traditional dating of the various speeches, as it is enough for my argument if the speeches discussed belong to the fourth century BC; for the same reasons I do not enter into discussions of authenticity.

¹³ See for instance Nicolai 2004: 20: 'l'intersezione fra oralità e scrittura nell'oratoria è continua'. Nicolai (at 22–3) also makes the important point, however, that early prose deliberately keeps its distance from spoken language; imitation of spoken, everyday language is something that begins later with Lysias and will reach its climax with Demosthenes. Isocrates was never part of this movement: his text is created to be read, individually or in narrow circles.

¹⁴ I develop here an astute observation of Olding (2007), concerning the request made by Aeschines in his *Against Timarchos* that the clerk read some poetic passages, a practice very unusual (normally the orator would have read them), and here possibly used to give authority to passages that diverge from the *vulgata* but support Aeschines' case.

¹⁵ An illocutory tendency; cf. Stirewalt 1993: 5 (quoted above, vii n. 9) on *parousia*, the projection of the official's person and the transmission of his authority through the letter, and the discussion above, 3–4, 8–9.

no strongly clear-cut distinction between speech and epistle.¹⁶ The analysis of the uses of letters in the speeches will confirm, but also nuance, the interpretation proposed above on the basis of the fragment from Antiphanes' *Sappho*.

In what follows, the focus will be mainly on letters; but I shall on occasion contrast the reports of letters and the use made of them in the speeches with that of other types of written document.¹⁷ I shall discuss the early logographers (Antiphon, Andocides, Lysias, and Isaeus), Demosthenes and the *corpus Demosthenicum*, and Aeschines, making only passing reference to the other orators. At the end, a discussion of Isocrates' work will address the issue of the distinction between epistle, speech, and treatise. What will not be discussed here are the letters attributed to the ancient orators (with a partial exception for Isocrates): the reason, beyond the difficulty posed by the issue of the authenticity of these documents, is that for the references to (or citations of) letters in speeches we have a context, the speech, that may help to evaluate them; such a context is lacking in the case of the letters.

6.1. ANTIPHON

Writing and written documents make a gradual entrance in the arena of the law-courts.¹⁸ Thus, it is no surprise to find that no laws or decrees are cited in Antiphon, although a number of witnesses are summoned. But in two passages there are references to writing, and, in particular, to letters. One, from the speech *On the Murder of Herodes*, delivered probably c.420 (at any rate between 420 and 412 BC), is a staple of all discussions of the perception of epistolary writing in Athens. Here is a translation of the text:

The prosecution further allege that they discovered on board a note stating that I had killed Herodes (γραμματείδιον εὑρεῖν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ, . . . , ὡς ἀποκτείναιμι), which I had intended to send to Lycinus. But what need had I to send a note, when the bearer himself was my accomplice? Not only would he, as one of the murderers, have told the story more clearly in his own words, but it would have been quite unnecessary to conceal the message from him, and it is essentially messages which cannot be disclosed to the bearer that are sent in writing. 54. Then again, an extensive message would have had to be written down, as its length would have prevented the bearer remembering it. But this one was brief enough to deliver—'The man is dead.' Moreover, bear in mind that the note contradicted the slave who was tortured, and the slave the note. The slave

¹⁶ Lysias: Blass 1887, i, 422–3 (the letters 'grösserenteils wenigstens echt gewesen sein mögen'); the very few fragments can be easily consulted in Carey's (2007) edition. Isocrates: Too 1995: 195–9; Livingstone 2001: 5–8; Nicolai 2004: 118–27; and below. On epistolary collections see Trapp 2003: 12–33.

¹⁷ All passages in which *epistole* is used have been examined, as well as most of those mentioning the exchange of some form of written note, be this designated as *grammata*, or by a verb of writing. A note of acknowledgement has, however, a different status from a letter: it is simply a written statement of something also discussed orally by the interested parties. On the use of written documents and witnesses as evidence in Athenian courts see Thomas 1989: 41–3; Bonner 1905; Harrison 1971: 133–54; Sickinger 1999; Thür 2005. On the role played by writing in the trial, see Bernard 1999: 205–17; Faraguna 2007 and 2009; Gagarin 2009.

¹⁸ On the gradual 'encroachment' of writing in legal contexts throughout the fourth century see Thomas 1989: 41–4.

stated under torture that he had committed the murder himself, whereas the note when opened revealed the fact that I was the murderer. 55. Which are we to believe? The prosecution discovered the note on board only during a second search, not during their first one; they had not hit on the idea at the time. It was not until the first witness had said nothing to incriminate me when tortured that they dropped the note in the boat, in order to have that, if nothing else, as a ground for accusing me. 56. Then, once the note had been read and the second witness, when tortured, persisted in disagreeing with the note, it was impossible to spirit away the message read from it. Needless to say, had the prosecution supposed that they would induce the slave to lie about me immediately, they would never have devised the message contained in the note. Call me witnesses to confirm these facts. (Antiph. 5. 53–6, trans. Maidment)

This passage shows that the fact of sending a written note, a letter, was not in itself extraordinary:¹⁹ the prosecution must have produced the note with the rest of the evidence. However, what Antiphon makes of this note is interesting. The fact that he accuses the prosecution of having forged the letter (an accusation that resonates with the contemporary debates of tragedians and sophists, as shown by the one developed around the story of Palamedes) cannot be taken to show that letters were not used for long-distance communications—the readiness to attempt a forgery might almost be interpreted in the opposite sense. But the defendant makes two important points about letters: the first and most important one is that written messages are necessary only when one does not want the bearer to learn the content of the message. This reminds one of a number of Herodotean and Thucydidean letters (in particular, the story of the contacts between Xerxes and Pausanias), and more generally of the Bellerophon story, the archetype of the genre. Written notes containing private information, ‘letters’, are thus as a matter of course likely to be regarded as suspect.²⁰ Would the orator have risked making such a point if writing letters had been common practice among the members of the jury? The second point is that the only other reason for writing letters is when the message is excessively long, too much so to be remembered; and this clearly was not the case with the *grammateidion*. It may be that Antiphon added this because he felt that his first point alone might not have been convincing; on the other hand, this too is probably a rhetorical ploy: the fact is that all the letters we have are extremely short, and that concision in the writing of letters was always praised by the ancient rhetoricians. His statements show at any rate that a letter is not envisaged as being anything more than a message couched in writing, and to be used only if other reasons, such as the length of the message or secrecy, make oral transmission difficult.

Thus, while letters have a place in the world of long-distance traders, they at the same time carry a degree of suspicion. This is confirmed by another passage in Antiphon’s corpus, from his *Prosecution of a Stepmother for Poisoning*, another forensic speech, delivered at some point between 420 and 411 bc. Here the prosecutor at the close of his speech affirms that victims of murder, if they have the time, summon friends and relatives and tell them who the murderers are, charging them to take vengeance; or, failing this, they make a statement in writing (*γράμματα γράφουσι*), call slaves as witnesses, and reveal the murderers to them. The speaker adds that his father followed the first option, called him, and ‘laid his

¹⁹ Stressed by Pébarthe 2006.

²⁰ A point highlighted by Harris 1989; on treacherous letters see also Rosenmeyer 2001: 45–55.

charge upon him', not on his slaves. Interestingly, the verb used is ἐπέστειλεν, the same that would have been used for a letter.²¹ A chiasmic structure is at work here in which the writing and showing to the slaves corresponds to the showing and 'transmitting' to the son (ἐπιστέλλω can be used for oral or written messages); the second procedure is supposed to be the best one. The defence had certainly stressed the slaves' ignorance of the facts, and possibly also the absence of any written indication on the part of the dead man as to the culpability of the stepmother. The prosecution counters this by emphasizing the status of the son, and by using a term that substitutes for the missing written statement. There is thus here a sense that a written accusation might have some weight; but it is only a vague intimation, quickly countered by the statement that the writing of a message is a second-best. But for these two instances, no written documents are part of the argument in Antiphon's speeches.

6.2. ANDOCIDES, ISAEUS, LYSIAS

Andocides differs from Antiphon, inasmuch as he quotes a number of documents: two decrees and three laws (besides numerous mentions of specific decrees), along with three lists of names, in his forensic speech *On the Mysteries* (delivered 399 BC); and another decree in his assembly speech *On his Return* (dated before 403, probably delivered around 408 BC). There is, however, no mention of letters in any of his speeches.²² Similar is the case of Isaeus: among the various pieces of evidence, here too, there is no mention of letters. Other types of documents, however, are referred to.²³

A letter appears in one early speech of the *corpus Lysiacum*, *For Polystratus*, dated to c.410 BC: the defendant asks the jury to 'consider' (σκέψασθε) a letter of his father—but the letter is not read, the content is simply very sketchily summarized, while the weight of the discussion is carried by witnesses.²⁴ Letters are also mentioned, but again not quoted, in the speech *On the Property of Aristophanes* (387 BC): ἐπιστολαί (messages, and not necessarily all of them written ones) sent by his father from Cyprus were one of the reasons why Aristophanes decided to go there and join Conon. Here too, no weight at all is laid on the ἐπιστολαί (whose status, to repeat, is not necessarily that of written messages), and immediately the

²¹ Antiph. 1. 30: ἐὰν δὲ τούτων ἀμαρτάνωσι, γράμματα γράφουσι, καὶ οἰκέτας τοὺς σφετέρους αὐτῶν ἐπικαλοῦνται μάρτυρας, καὶ δηλοῦσιν ὅφ' ὧν ἀπόλλυνται. Καὶ κείνος ἐμοὶ νέω' ἔτι δντι ταῦτα ἐδήλωσε καὶ ἐπέστειλεν, ὃ ἄνδρες, οὐ τοῖς ἐαυτοῦ δούλοις.

²² Resp. Andoc. 1. 77; 1. 8. 3 (decrees) 1. 85; 1. 87; 1. 96 (laws); and Andoc. 2. 23.

²³ A law on adoption in *On the Estate of Menecles* (2. 16); laws in *On the Estate of Pyrrhus* (3. 53), along with a number of written depositions; laws regulating the right of inheritance in *On the Estate of Hagnias* (11. 11 and 22); decrees in the speech *On the Estate of Philoktemon* (6. 50), along with a number of written depositions.

²⁴ Lys. 20. 27: 'Consider now the letter (ἐπιστολήν) from my father, which he arranged to be conveyed to me, whether its contents were good or evil to your people. In it he had written about domestic affairs (τά τε γὰρ οἰκεία ἐνεγέγραπτο), and moreover, that when things were going well in Sicily I should return. Now surely your interests and those of the people there were the same; so that, if he had not been loyal to the city and to you, he would never have sent such a letter (οὐκ ἂν ποτε τοιαῦτα ἐπέστειλεν).'

speaker calls on a witness, Eunomus, to attest the truth of what he has affirmed.²⁵ The paucity of letters is to be set against a background of relatively frequent references to (and quotes in extenso from) decrees, laws, and other documents;²⁶ if letters are infrequent, no particular connotations are, however, attached to letter writing.

We reach at this point the second quarter of the fourth century, the period in which, even according to the most conservative estimates, the orators begin to make an ample use of documents. In this connection, Thomas has pointed to the 'innovative' use of written documents, mainly decrees and laws, by Aeschines and, to a lesser degree, by Demosthenes.²⁷ What of letters?

6.3. DEMOSTHENES

Besides the sixty-one extant speeches by Demosthenes (not all of them authentic), fifty-six self-standing prologues and six letters survive. Both the authenticity of the prologues and that of the letters have been disputed, but it is commonly accepted that the first four letters are probably authentic, while doubts remain concerning the other two. As already stated, only the references to letters in the speeches will be discussed here; yet it is important to bear in mind this letter writing activity by Demosthenes, because it is part of the more general development of epistolarity in the fourth century.²⁸

6.3.1. Private Speeches

Letters are treated rather differently in the forensic and in the political speeches. A handful of references to letters occur in some of Demosthenes' forensic speeches, alongside references to decrees, laws, and wills. In this context, letters

²⁵ Lys. 19. 23: ἐπιστολῶν δ' αὐτῷ ἡκουσῶν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μηδενὸς ἀπορήσειν ἐκ Κύπρου, . . . ὡς τοίνυν ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, κάλει μοι Εὐνόμον. <Μάρτυς>.

²⁶ Lysias quotes a number of decrees in his *Against Agoratus* (13. 22, 28, 35, 50, 55, 59, 71); another decree in the speech *Against Andocides* (6. 24); three laws in *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* (1. 28, 30, and 31); a law in *For the Soldier* (9. 8); a high number of laws in *Against Theomnestus 1* (10. 9, 14, 16, and 17, 18, 19), two of which are again referred to in *Against Theomnestus 2* (11. 3 and 6: in this speech, the emphasis is on the wording of the laws, hence the number of quotes); and laws in *Against Alcibiades 1* (14. 5 and 8; the speech closes with a request to read, one after the other, the laws, the oaths, and the charge, 14. 47). Other documents are also read: thus, in the speech *On the Property of Aristophanes*, an inventory of bronze plates (19. 28) and the record of public service of the father of the appellant (19. 58).

²⁷ Thomas 1989: 69–72, 83–93. A complete list would take too much space: one example must suffice. In Demosthenes' *Against Meidias*, the following documents are read: five laws (8, 10, 47, 94, 113); seven witnesses' statements (22, 82, 93, 107, 121, 168, 174); and an oracle (52–3). The question of the authenticity of the documents cited is immaterial for our purpose; see MacDowell 1990: 43–7, who concludes that although documents will not have been present in the original draft of the speech (they are not included in the stichometric totals), they may have been collected in a separate dossier, as would have been the case for the trial, and were inserted into the speeches by an editor at a later date. Thus the authenticity of each document should be judged by itself.

²⁸ The letters of Demosthenes have been thoroughly discussed by Goldstein 1968; see now also Worthington 2006. All letters except the fifth are addressed to the Athenians, and introduced by the greeting Δημοσθένης τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν (in the first letter, preceded by a short preamble). The fifth letter is addressed to an individual, Heracleodorus, and is introduced by the greeting εὖ πράττειν. All letters close with the wish εὐτυχεῖτε (or the singular εὐτύχει for the fifth letter).

are used to impart information, or for recommendations.²⁹ Such is the case of a letter in the speech *Against Polycles* (transmitted in the *corpus Demosthenicum*, but written by Apollodorus, and delivered at some point between 360 and 358 BC): the speaker, who was at the time of the events serving as trierarch, mentions sending a subordinate, a certain Euktemon, with money and letters to friends of his father ([Dem.] 50. 18). Similarly, the speech *Against Nicostratus*, delivered sometime after 368/367 BC, shows that Apollodorus probably used a letter (the Greek has ἐπιστέλλω without further precision) to communicate with Nicostratus when he had to leave in a hurry ([Dem.] 53. 5); and it is clear that Nicostratus, when captured and sold as a slave in Aegina, used both letters and messengers to inform his brother of what had happened and of his current situation ([Dem.] 53. 6).

But letters are also vehicles for intrigue: in the same *Against Polycles*, the speaker recalls the arrival of a dispatch boat with a messenger and letters (50. 46) that turn out to have been sent by Callistratus (the well-known Athenian politician from Aphidna) to Timomachus (the *strategos* in charge). This testifies to the use of written correspondence, although in this case letters might be expected, as Callistratus was at that moment an exile. But the letter of Callistratus is a 'secretive' one, part of a ploy, according to Apollodorus, to have Callistratus illegally transported on board his trireme—when he learnt of the content of the letter from a sailor who had overheard slaves talking, Apollodorus refused to continue on the mission.

Something more on the status of the letter as document can be gathered from Demosthenes' oration 38, *Against Nausimachus and Xenopeithes*, probably written around 346 BC: there, the speaker stresses the unlikelihood that a written message (the Greek has *grammata*, which can mean a letter, but is not specific) may succeed in enforcing a request for payment:³⁰

ἔστιν οὖν οὕτω τις ἀνθρώπων ἄτοπος, ὥσθ' ἂ τοὺς κυρίους διεκρούσατο μὴ καταθεῖναι τοσοῦτον χρόνον, ταῦτα τῷ μὴ κυρίῳ πέμψαντι γράμματα' ἐκὼν ἀποδοῦναι;

(Dem. 38. 12)

Now is there any human being so singular that, after having evaded payment to the rightful owners for such a long time, he shall hand it over voluntarily to one not entitled to it who demanded it by letter?

Finally, a few other speeches illustrate the milieu in which letters were mainly used: that of the long-distance traders. Thus in the (possibly Demosthenic) speech *Against Phormio*, dated 327/326 BC, the speaker mentions having given Phormio letters for his commercial partners in the Bosphorus:

When he went, then, to Bosphorus, having letters (ἐπιστολάς) from me, which I had given him to deliver to my slave, who was spending the winter there, and to a partner of mine—having stated in the letter (γράφας ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ) the sum which I had lent and the security, and having instructed them, as soon as the goods should be unloaded, to inspect them and keep an eye on them—this man did not deliver the letters (ἐπιστολάς) which he had received from me, to ensure that they might know nothing of what he was doing. (Dem. 34. 8)

The letters had been sent to warn the slave and the commercial partner of the claimant of the need personally to check the actions of Phormio; but they were not

²⁹ Mirhady 2000 discusses Demosthenes' use of written documents in his private speeches, and stresses the importance attributed by him to written proofs (be they from witnesses or others).

³⁰ MacDowell 2004: 195.

delivered, nor did Phormio trouble himself with summoning witnesses for his transactions: as the speaker points out, 'All other men who borrow for a double voyage, when they are setting off from their ports, take care to have many witnesses present' (Dem. 34. 28). Not so Phormio; the lack of witnesses, together with his failure to deliver the letters, are repeatedly used in the speech to discredit Phormio's character:

You did not bring as a witness our slave who was in Bosphorus nor our partner, nor did you deliver to them the letters (τὰς ἐπιστολὰς) which we gave to you, and in which were written instructions (ἐν αἷς ἐγγράπτο) that they should keep close watch on you in whatever you might do! Well, judges, what crime is there that such a man is not capable of doing, who, after receiving letters (γράμματα λαβὼν), did not deliver them rightly and honestly? (Dem. 34. 28–9)

While the main point in the argument as a whole is the lack of witnesses in the dealings between Phormio and the ship-owner Lampis, who according to the speaker has become Phormio's partner in fraud, it is interesting that the speaker makes so much of the non-delivery of letters, whose very existence cannot be proved: evidently, the speaker must have felt that this was a good rhetorical point.³¹

The use of letters by merchants is also a conspicuous feature of the speech *Against Dionysodorus*, delivered sometime after 323/322 BC: Dionysodorus' dealings are contextualized within a description of the workings of the grain market, in which retailers manipulate the price of the grain by sending letters to those in Egypt, informing them of the fluctuations of the price and allowing them to decide whether to ship the grain to Athens or elsewhere.³² This is what the speaker claims happened, against the contract that had been agreed: Dionysodorus sent a man with a letter to Rhodes (τὰ γράμματα τὰ παρὰ τούτου ἀποσταλέντα, 56. 10), informing his partner that the price of the grain in Athens was low, with the result that the merchants sold the grain in Rhodes.

6.3.2. Political Speeches

Two types of letter appear fairly often in the political orations of Demosthenes: royal letters, most of them from Philip II, and the reports that *strategoï* or ambassadors would send to the polis while away on a campaign or a mission.

³¹ Cf. Dem. 34. 32: 'Yes, he says, for the agreement requested me to repay the money to the shipowner. But it did not prevent you from summoning witnesses or delivering the letters!' 'Ἡ γὰρ συγγραφὴ με, φησί, τῷ ναυκλήρῳ ἐκέλευεν ἀποδοῦναι τὸ χρυσίον. μάρτυρας δέ γ' οὐκ ἐκώλυεν παρακαλεῖν, οὐδὲ τὰς ἐπιστολὰς ἀποδοῦναι. Mercantile cases (*dikai emporikai*), such as this one, followed a special procedure, whereby the ground for prosecution had to be the existence of a written contract between the disputants that was claimed not to have been fulfilled: MacDowell 2004: 13. And indeed, written contracts and other documents are mentioned in the speech: the contract is mentioned at 34. 6, and the speaker asks for it to be read out at 34. 7; at this point, the entry of the customs officers and the depositions are also read, as are, later in the speech, laws regulating maritime contracts.

³² [Dem.] 56. 8: 'Then those at home would send letters to those abroad (ἐπεμπον γράμματα οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες τοῖς ἀποδημοῦσιν) advising them of the prevailing prices, so that if grain was expensive in your market, they might bring it here, and if the price should fall, they might put it in to some other port. This is mainly why, ο judges, the price of grain went up, because of such letters and conspiracies (ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων ἐπιστολῶν καὶ συνεργιών).'

We learn from *On the Corrupt Embassy* that such reports were discussed collectively, for according to Demosthenes his colleagues in the embassy voted against sending a dispatch he had written and chose to write a different one, which they sent to Athens.³³ Thus, these are letters, but by no means private, exclusive communications. Examples of generals' reports in Demosthenes are to be found in the speech *Against Aristocrates* (352 BC): letters from the *strategoí* Iphicrates and Timotheus to the Athenians are read as evidence against Charidemus (23. 151–2), together with a decree and a witness' statement;³⁴ in the same speech, a (deceptive) letter of Charidemus himself to Athens—or rather, as Demosthenes specifies, to his friend Cephisodotus, but meant for the Athenians—is also brought forward as evidence (23. 153–6), as well as letters from Athenian magistrates of cities in the Thracian Chersonese (23. 156–62).³⁵ The practice is attested in other types of literary source (Nicias' letter in Thucydides, the reports mentioned by Xenophon in connection with the battle of Arginusae), but also in honorific inscriptions. Clearly, from the fourth century onwards letter writing was integrated into the practices of the Athenian polis, at least for that which concerned internal communication (i.e. between Athenians).³⁶

But the bulk of references to letters in the *corpus Demosthenicum* concerns royal letters. This is not surprising, as letters are the usual means by which monarchs communicate their decisions to functionaries and cities within their kingdom, and also beyond it.³⁷ Philip II of Macedon, Alexander, and after them the Hellenistic kings made an ample use of letters; but is interesting to find that the Thracian kings already had been communicating in an official context through letters. Thus, in his *Against Aristocrates*, Demosthenes mentions two letters of Cotys to the Athenians, one written when he was in difficulty (probably around 362 BC), the other when he felt secure, in late 361–early 360 BC, and contrasts them sharply: 'I will read to you the letter that Cotys sent at the time of Miltocythes' revolt, and also the one which, when the kingdom was fully in his power, he sent to Timomachus before seizing your outposts. *Letters*'

³³ Dem. 19. 174: τὴν μὲν γραφεῖσαν ἐπιστολὴν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀπεψηφίσαντο μὴ πέμπειν, αὐτοὶ δ' οὐδ' ὁτιοῦν ὑγιεὺς γράψαντες ἔπεμψαν.

³⁴ Dem. 23. 151: 'read the decree concerning the hostages, the letter of Iphicrates, that of Timotheus, and lastly this deposition'. Charidemus was a mercenary from Euboea who changed sides a number of times between 367 and 357, first fighting under Iphicrates for the Athenians, then joining Cotys, then accepting the proposal of Timotheus and moving to the Athenian side, then from 362 BC joining first the rebel satraps of Asia Minor, then the Athenians for a short while, and then again Cotys and his young son Cersobleptes. When Chares in 357 recovered the Chersonese for the Athenians, Charidemus' supporters managed to present this as a result of his efforts, so that he received a crown, against the opposition of Demosthenes. On the events and specifically on these letters see Heskell 1997: 45–6.

³⁵ Discussion of the chronology of the events and of the letters in Heskell 1997: 54–9.

³⁶ Thuc. 7. 10–15; Xen. *Hell.* 1. 1. 23 and 3. 3. 8 (Sparta); Xen. 1. 7. 4 and 1. 7. 17 (Athens, Arginusae); see above, ch. 4. Mentions of letters in decrees: see above, n. 7.

³⁷ See Welles (1934); Bertrand (1985); Lewis (1996); Ceccarelli (2005a). Philip, in the letter preserved in the *corpus Demosthenicum*, states more than once that he sent letters: e.g. at the opening of the speech, in 12. 2, where he also complains of the violation of his privacy: 'when Nicias, my herald, was kidnapped from my territory, you not only failed to bring the law-breakers to justice, but you kept the victim a prisoner for ten months, and the letters from me, of which he was the bearer, you read before your Assembly (ὡς δ' ἔφερε παρ' ἡμῶν ἐπιστολάς, ἀνέγνωτ' ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος)' (trans. J. H. Vince). Further letters are mentioned in 12. 22 ('For I wrote to you again and again on the subject [Amphipolis]').

(Dem. 23. 115).³⁸ Other letters by Cersobleptes and the Thracian kings are read out to the assembly to show the unreliability of Charidemus (23. 178). Just as is the case at times with other documents used by the orators, embedded letters often carry a meaning that goes beyond the literal import of the letter itself and are used to give strength to the argument.³⁹

But most of the references to letters in the political speeches of Demosthenes concern Philip. Sometimes, the text of the letter is read (in a few cases, the text of short letters, whose authenticity is uncertain, has been incorporated into the speeches); one self-standing, longer letter of Philip has also been transmitted in the *corpus Demosthenicum* alongside the *Reply to Philip*.⁴⁰ Of course, the number of references to letters of Philip is much higher than the number of letters actually sent, since Demosthenes and Aeschines more than once refer to the same letters:⁴¹ as we shall see, these references are exploited by Demosthenes as part of a rhetorical strategy; they function as weapons of psychological persuasion.

The *First Philippic* is a case in point: imagery connected with letter and decree writing plays a central role in the speech (delivered in 352/351 BC). According to Rowe, Demosthenes here pursues an ‘inversion strategy’, and builds a *mundus perversus* out of the opposition between action on the one hand and hearing, talking, writing, and sitting on the other, an opposition that becomes stronger as the speech progresses.⁴² Demosthenes opens the speech with an exhortation to the Athenians and a first proposal for action; he then continues:

πρὸ δὲ τούτων δυνάμιν τιν', ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, φημι προχειρίσασθαι δεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἣ συνεχῶς πολεμήσει καὶ κακῶς ἐκείνον ποιήσει. μή μοι μυρίους μηδὲ δις μυρίους ξένους, μηδὲ τὰς ἐπιστολιμαίους ταύτας δυνάμεις, ἀλλ' ἣ τῆς πόλεως ἔσται, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἓνα καὶ πλείους καὶ τὸν δεῖνα καὶ ὄντινούν χειροτονήσητε στρατηγόν, τούτῳ πείσεται καὶ ἀκολουθήσει. (Dem. 4. 19)

But in addition to this, Athenians, I propose that you should keep in hand some force that will constantly make war and annoy him. None of your ten thousand or twice ten thousand mercenaries, none of your ‘epistolary forces’, but one that shall be the state’s; and one which, whether you appoint one or more generals, or this or that man or any other, shall obey and follow him. (Trans. Rowe modified)

The *epistolimaioi dunameis* are imaginary forces on paper, such as may have been often mentioned in letters to and from generals, and seen as typical of the Athenian democracy; their being couched on ‘letter paper’ (rather than decree paper) and contrasted with the city’s real forces may add one more element to the

³⁸ The Athenian general Timomachus failed in the war against Cotys in 361/360 BC and chose to go into exile rather than being condemned. See on the events and for the date of the letters Heskel 1997: 81–3 and 88–91.

³⁹ Carey (1994) explores the role played by written documents (not letters though), and the possibilities for manipulation they afford.

⁴⁰ The authenticity of Philip’s letter ([Dem]. Or. 12), whose dramatic date is 339 BC, has been disputed, with some (among whom Jacoby) attributing it to Anaximenes; *contra*, most recently Gauger 2000: 73 (‘wohl echt’) and 306 n. 20. The *Reply* (Or. 11, probably not Demosthenic) answers another letter of Philip; see above 166–7 and n. 185, and on the historical context, Harris 1995: 75–6.

⁴¹ List of the actual letters of Philip in Gauger 2000: 45; see also above.

⁴² Rowe 1968; see also Mader 2006 for the contrast psephisma/action. I single out those elements of the ‘topsy-turvy’ Athenian world created by Demosthenes that pertain to letters.

inversion picture, as letters in public contexts are mostly the prerogative of kings. In the next paragraph, Demosthenes pursues his theme by remarking that

πάντ' ἐλάττω νομίζοντες εἶναι τοῦ δέοντος, καὶ τὰ μέγιστ' ἐν τοῖς ψηφίσμασιν αἰρούμενοι, ἐπὶ τῷ πράττειν οὐδὲ τὰ μικρὰ ποιεῖτε. (Dem. 4. 20)

thinking everything insufficient, you adopt the strongest measures in decrees; but when it comes to action you fail to do the slightest.

Letters and decrees, and their counterpart, action, are brought together ten paragraphs later, when Demosthenes exhorts the Athenians to vote for his proposal:

ἐπειδὴν δ' ἐπιχειροτονῇτε τὰς γνώμας, ἂν ὑμῖν ἀρέσκη, χειροτονήσετε, ἵνα μὴ μόνον ἐν τοῖς ψηφίσμασι καὶ ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς πολεμῇτε Φιλίππῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις. (Dem. 4. 30)

When you sanction the proposals, if you approve them, you will vote so that you may fight Philip not only with decrees and dispatches, but with deeds also.

It is worth noting that here letters are on the side of inaction and of the polis (Athens), rather than on the side of the king; in Demosthenes' presentation, only when they are royal do letters correspond to action. Key terms such as 'decrees', 'letters', 'hopes' are repeated throughout the speech, in combination with other key terms such as 'Philip', 'triremes', 'forces', and with the notions of enforcement, or conversely of emptiness and inaction;⁴³ 'straight', tyrannical letters surface as well, with the mention of hybistic *ἐπιστολάς* ('letters/orders') sent by Philip to the Euboeans ('Meanwhile Philip has the effrontery to send such letters as these to the Euboeans', *ὁ δ' εἰς τοῦθ' ὕβρεως ἐλήλυθεν ὥστ' ἐπιστέλλειν Εὐβοεῦσιν ἥδη τοιαύτας ἐπιστολάς*, Dem. 4. 37–8). The letter is read; Demosthenes wryly comments: 'Most of what has been read, Athenians, is unfortunately true—possibly, however, not pleasant to listen to.'⁴⁴

Similarly, there are numerous references to two letters of Philip in the pseudo-Demosthenic *De Halonneso* (342 BC). The speech was written as an answer to a letter by Philip proposing a settlement through arbitration of the island's ownership, so references to this letter and to an earlier one, 'still to be seen in the *bouleuterion*' (*ἣ ἐστι νῦν ἐν τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ*), are not surprising.⁴⁵ Particularly interesting is the beginning of the speech, because there, for a moment in the opening sentence, the 'letter form' chosen by Philip is pitted against the free discussion of the assembly:

δεῖνόν γὰρ ἂν εἴη, εἰ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος παρρησίαν αἱ παρ' ἐκείνου πεμπόμεναι ἐπιστολαὶ ἀνέλοιεν (Dem. 7. 1)

For it would be monstrous if the letters sent by him were to destroy the freedom of utterance of this platform.

⁴³ As in 4. 44–5; see Rowe 1968: 365–7. Mader (2006) traces this strategy in all Philippic speeches.

⁴⁴ The manuscripts indicate the reading of only one letter (singular), against the plural in Demosthenes' reference. Could the discrepancy be interpreted in the sense of a conscious 'tragic' choice on the part of Demosthenes of the plural *ἐπιστολάς* (the term is always found in the plural in tragedy)? This would fit well in Rowe's overall argument (1968).

⁴⁵ Passages in which reference is made to letters are: 7. 1; 7. 18–21; 7. 27 and 7. 29; 7. 32; 7. 33–4 (the letter in the *bouleuterion*); 7. 41; 7. 45; and 7. 46.

The same picture emerges from the speech *On the Corrupt Embassy* (343 BC). A letter of Philip, allegedly composed with the help of Aeschines, is here the centre of attention: reference to it is made for the first time in 19. 36 (where the letter is said to be nothing more than an ἀπολογία γεγραμμένη—an interesting *iunctura*); the letter is read out at 19. 38. We find in it a positive evaluation of writing—or at least, a shrewd appreciation of the respective merits of written and oral reports: for according to Demosthenes, in the letter Philip took upon himself responsibility for the failure of the ambassadors to do what they had been charged to do (19. 37), a gesture for which there was anyway no danger that he would be punished.

But all the matters in which he was trying to deceive and overreach the city were left for Aeschines to report by word of mouth (οὗτος ἀπήγγειλεν), so that you might never be able to incriminate or blame Philip, as those statements were not in the letter or in any other direct communication of his (μήτ' ἐν ἐπιστολῇ μήτ' ἄλλοθι μηδαμοῦ τῶν παρ' ἐκείνου τούτων ἐνόντων). (Dem. 19. 38)⁴⁶

Writing—in this case, written letters—is presented as a powerful means of associating people with their statements. Demosthenes follows this up with the reading of excerpts from an earlier letter of Philip (19. 40), from which it appears that Philip had committed himself to set down in writing what great benefits he would confer to the polis once a peace was reached and if there should be an alliance.⁴⁷ Clearly Demosthenes is here reading more into Philip's letter than there ever was, and is manipulating the writing with his own words; clearly also, whatever the power of written words, Philip could and would back out of anything he might not have found convenient. Whether Philip was indeed in that instance deliberately playing against each other the two forms of communication, the oral report of the ambassadors and the letter, as Demosthenes states (19. 37: 'and this was not arranged in this way by accident', ἀπὸ ταυτομάτου), or not is a moot point: Philip, of course, also sent ambassadors to Athens (in Elaphebolion 346 BC, before the peace of Philocrates was ratified, and again in 343 BC, when Pytho of Byzantium and other ambassadors from the allies came to announce his willingness to revise the terms of the peace of Philocrates), and he could remain evasive in his letters as much as through his ambassadors.⁴⁸ What is important is that Demosthenes could present as plausible such an interpretation. Moreover, playing off embassies against letters offered a welcome opportunity for a change in register. While embassies could only be 'remembered' by the orator, the reading out of a letter is a dramatic moment, a pause in the speech, invested with a sense of the presence of the sender—if only because the document is read by a person different from the orator, a clerk.

⁴⁶ Dem. 19. 37-8: ἃ δ' ἐκείνος (Philip) ἐξαπατήσαι καὶ προλαβεῖν τῆς πόλεως ἐβούλετο, οὗτος (Aeschines) ἀπήγγειλεν, ἵνα μηδ' ἐγκαλέσαι μηδὲ μέμψασθαι μηδὲν ὕστερον ὑμεῖς ἔχοιτε Φιλίππῳ, μήτ' ἐν ἐπιστολῇ μήτ' ἄλλοθι μηδαμοῦ τῶν παρ' ἐκείνου τούτων ἐνόντων. λέγε δ' αὐτοῖς αὐτὴν τὴν ἐπιστολὴν, ἣν ἔγραψε μὲν οὗτος, ἔπεμψε δ' ἐκείνος· καὶ σκοπεῖθ' ὅτι τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τρόπον, ὃν διεξέληλυθ' ἐγώ.

⁴⁷ 19. 41: πρὶν μὲν εἰρήνης τυχεῖν, εἰ καὶ συμμαχία προσγένοιτ' αὐτῷ, γράψειν ὁμολόγει ἡλίκα τὴν πόλιν εὖ ποιήσειν· ἐπειδὴ δ' ἀμφότερ' αὐτῷ γέγονεν, οὐκ εἰδέναι φησὶ τί ἂν ποιῶν χαρίσαιοτο. On the vague character of these promises see Harris 1995: 64-5; on the historical background of the whole affair, Harris 1995, *passim*.

⁴⁸ On the embassy of 343, see Harris 1995: 110-12.

Slightly later in the same speech (19. 44–5), the first letter, but also, tellingly, the words of Philip's ambassadors (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ τοὺς παρὰ τοῦ Φιλίππου πρέσβεις ταῦτα λέγειν μηδὲ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν τὴν Φιλίππου) are contrasted with the words of Aeschines, and the latter is found to be a liar. Two further letters of Philip are also read out in the Assembly, inviting the Athenians to join him in his campaign in Phocis: although that was not, Demosthenes says, Philip's real intention, the ambassadors played along with him (19. 51–2).⁴⁹ Letters of Philip are mentioned or read out and discussed along these lines quite a few other times in *On the Corrupt Embassy* (for instance, in 19. 187 they are mentioned, again ironically, in parallel with the *πρόχειρος λόγος*, the 'easy sentence' of those who affirm that Philip is in fact a benefactor).⁵⁰ It is in a sense the very number of references to letters of Philip that support Demosthenes' claim of his heavy-handed intervention in Athenian (and Greek) politics, by showing how forceful his presence is in Athenian public affairs.

Letters from Philip are also mentioned in *On the Chersonese* (341 BC) and in the *Third Philippic* (341 BC).⁵¹ In the latter, Philip's writings (and actions) are again contrasted with the inactivity of the Greeks, who 'see and hear all this, and yet [we] do not send embassies to one another and express [our] indignation': as will become clearer in a moment, the weapons of the tyrant (letters and war) are being pitted against the weapons of the city-states (embassies, decrees, and assembly-speeches). This theme is picked up in other speeches: thus, the contrast between the inactivity of the Athenians and the energy of Philip, including his letter writing, reappears in the *Reply to the Letter of Philip*.⁵²

Five letters from Philip are read out (and their texts included) in *On the Crown* (a speech held in 330 BC).⁵³ Of these, two are particularly interesting, inasmuch as through their position they highlight the fact that the decree is the standard method used by the Greek cities for interstate communication. These letters, one directed to Athens and the second to Thebes, are Philip's response to two decrees of the Athenians (18. 164–7). Later in the speech, other letters of Philip were read to the public (18. 218 and 221); again, interestingly, Demosthenes presents this latest outburst of epistolary activity on the part of Philip as a result of the many decrees moved by himself:

Ἀλλὰ μὴν οἷας τότ' ἀφίει φωνὰς ὁ Φίλιππος καὶ ἐν οἷαις ἦν ταραχαῖς ἐπὶ τούτοις, ἐκ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν τῶν ἐκείνου μαθήσεσθε ὧν εἰς Πελοπόννησον ἔπεμπε. καὶ μοι λέγε ταύτας λαβὼν, ἵν' εἰδῇτε, ἥ ἐμὴ συνέχεια καὶ πλάνοι καὶ τालαιωτοὶ καὶ τὰ πολλὰ

⁴⁹ See the comments of MacDowell 2000: 228–9.

⁵⁰ See also 19. 161, where a letter from Philip is 'sandwiched' between three decrees, with the purpose of showing that the embassy did not accomplish what it had been asked to do; and 19. 316–17, where, at the close of the oration, Demosthenes returns to the complicity of Aeschines in writing Philip's letter.

⁵¹ Dem. 8. 16; and Dem. 9. 27.

⁵² Dem. 11. 17: 'he always takes a personal share in the hardships and dangers of the campaign, never neglects a chance, never wastes any season of the year; while we—for the truth must out—sit here idle; we are always hanging back and passing resolutions and haunting the market-place to learn the latest news. Yet what more startling news could there be than that a Macedonian should insult Athenians, daring to send us such a letter as you have heard read a moment ago?' (trans. J. H. Vince).

⁵³ Dem. 18. 39; 18. 73 (mention of letter) and 77–8 (actual letter); 18. 156–7; 18. 166 and 167 (to the Thebans).

ψηφίσμαθ' ἃ νῦν οὗτος διέσυρεν, τί ἀπηργάσατο... 221 Λέγε τὰς ἐπιστολὰς τὰς τοῦ Φιλίππου.

But indeed, what sort of language Philip gave vent to at that time, and what sort of confusion he was in through these events, you shall learn from letters by him, which he kept sending to the Peloponnese. Take them and read them, so that you may see what my perseverance, my travels and hardships, and the many decrees, at which Aeschines was just now scoffing, what they achieved... Read the letters of Philip.

We have come almost full circle from the picture drawn in the *First Philippic*; democratic decrees are now the reason for royal discomfort, and for epistolary royal communication. What comes out clearly from this is the role played by rhetorical construction in the use of these 'documents'.

6.4. AESCHINES

Two of the three extant speeches by Aeschines present frequent references to letters and letter writing—not accidentally, they are the two that relate more directly to Demosthenes. The orator opens his speech *On the Embassy* (delivered in 343 BC as an answer to Demosthenes' attack), with a summary of what he had said to Philip at the time of the first embassy (early in 346 BC); this he ends by stating that he then produced for Philip as proof of what he was saying the letters of the persons named, the decrees of the demos, and the text of the truce concluded by Callisthenes with Perdicas in 363 BC.⁵⁴ To what letters exactly Aeschines is referring to in this context is unclear; they must be relatively old documents, going back some twenty years in time, involving Macedonian kings such as Amyntas and members of the Macedonian royal house (Eurydice), but also possibly Athenian generals such as Iphicrates. In this case, Aeschines could have found the letters, together with the decrees and the text of the truce, in the Metroon, where the central archive was housed; if these documents had been used to impress Philip then, their mention now has the purpose of showing to the Assembly how carefully and comprehensively he has always managed matters.

Aeschines then goes on to recount how, on their return to Athens, the embassy gave a short oral report to the boule, and handed over a letter sent by Philip (2. 45); and how, when the embassy gave a report to the Assembly, this same letter was read at the request of Demosthenes, together with the decree on the basis of which the embassy had been sent (2. 49–50). Later in the speech, when discussion has moved to the second embassy (late spring 346), Aeschines has a clerk read a letter sent by Chares to the Athenians, informing them that Cersobleptes had lost his kingdom and that Philip had taken Hieron Oros.⁵⁵ This is again an instance of the use of letters for internal communication between *stratēgoi* on campaign and the polis.

⁵⁴ Aeschin. 2. 31: καὶ πάντων ὧν εἴποιμι μάρτυρας τὰς ἐκείνων ἐπιστολὰς παρειχόμεν καὶ τὰ ψηφίσματα τοῦ δήμου καὶ τὰς Καλλισθένους ἀνοχάς.

⁵⁵ Aeschin. 2. 90: ἀκούσατε δὴ τῆς Χάρητος ἐπιστολῆς, ἣν ἐπέστειλε τότε τῷ δήμῳ, ὅτι Κερσοβλέπτης ἀπολώλεκε τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ Ἱερὸν ὄρος κατείληφε Φίλιππος Ἐλαφβολιῶνος μηνὸς ἐβδόμη φθίνοντος. Δημοσθένης δ' ἐν τῷ δήμῳ προήδρενε τούτου τοῦ μηνός, εἰς ὧν τῶν πρέσβεων, ἔκτῃ φθίνοντος. Ἐπιστολή.

The letter, however, is used not for its content, but in order to mount a chronological argument: the fact that the information contained in the letter reached Athens on 25 Elaphebolion (end of March) serves to exculpate Aeschines from the accusation of having delayed sending help to Cersobleptes: the boule decreed that the ambassadors should set out to receive the oaths on 3 Mounichion (April), well after the fall of Cersobleptes. (Incidentally, we learn that dispatches could travel at a remarkable speed: the letter announced that Hieron Oros was taken on 24 Elaphebolion; it reached Athens on the next day!)

Letters crop up again a few paragraphs later in this same speech: Aeschines now defends himself against the accusation of having written for Philip the letter that the latter sent to Athens (2. 124–31). Again, it is not the content that is—for the moment—at issue, but the fact that Aeschines supposedly helped Philip in writing it. This accusation gives Aeschines the opportunity to mention quite a few persons (Leosthenes, Philip himself, and Pytho of Byzantion) who would have been perfectly capable of writing such a letter without any need for his being involved in the affair himself. Interestingly, the ability at letter writing is linked to an ability in public speaking: so in the case of Leosthenes, who ‘would not have been competent to write a clever letter—a man whom some do not hesitate to rank next to Callistratus of Aphidna as an able orator’ (ὁ μὲν γὰρ Λεωσθένης . . . οὐ δυνατὸς ἦν ἐπιδεξίως ἐπιστολὴν γράψαι, ὃν οὐκ ὀκνοῦσί τινες ἀποφαίνεσθαι μετὰ Καλλίστρατον τὸν Ἀφιδναῖον τῶν ἄλλων μάλιστα εἰπεῖν δύνασθαι, 2. 124), so in the case of Philip, ‘against whom Demosthenes was not able to hold his own when he tried to speak on your behalf’ (2. 125). The only one of the group whose ability in writing letters is attested by writing expertise, rather than ability in speaking, is the otherwise little-known Pytho, ‘a man who takes pride in his ability as a writer’ (ἄνθρωπος ἐπὶ τῷ γράφειν μέγα φρονῶν, 2. 125); there may be a slightly negative connotation in this remark—the man was a student of Isocrates, hence the connection with writing rather than speech, but he had also gone over to Macedonia.⁵⁶ The letter in question is cited a few paragraphs later—and if we are to trust Aeschines’ summary of it, it must have been a fairly plain and matter-of-fact one. But the rhetorical question asked of the audience is informative, ‘Does it not seem to you that Philip would have been able to write that in the daytime, and without my help?’ (2. 129), as it implies that the writing of a royal letter could be a simple, banal thing, not requiring any (dangerous) sophistication.⁵⁷

Moving to a different accusation, Aeschines appeals to composite evidence to prove his contention that the Phocians had turned towards Philip even before he was elected ambassador: his evidence comprises the testimony of the two heralds of the mysteries, a letter of the Athenian general Proxenos, and the testimony of

⁵⁶ Pytho was at Pella in 346 and may have played a role in the negotiations that led to the Peace of Philocrates; he certainly came to Athens in 343 as a representative of Philip to renegotiate the peace of Philocrates (see *RE*, s.v. ‘Pytho 4’). On this passage, cf. Harris 1995: 10; Carey 2000: 135 and 139.

⁵⁷ Aeschin. 2. 128–9: ‘Take this letter (ἐπιστολὴν), which Philip sent. It clearly must be full of deception for the city, this letter we spent the entire night writing (ἡγρυπνοῦμεν γράφοντες). Letter. You hear, gentlemen, that he says “I gave my oath to your ambassadors”, and has written (γέγραφε) the names of those of his allies who were present, both the names of the representatives themselves and of their states; and he says he will send to you (ἀποστελεῖν φησι) those of his allies who were not there in time. Does it not seem to you that Philip would have been able to write (γράψαι) that in the daytime (μεθ’ ἡμέραν), and without my help?’

the envoys sent by Proxenos to the Phocians.⁵⁸ The wording of Aeschines' comments makes it fairly clear that the letter and the witnesses serve two different purposes:

'To prove that I am speaking the truth, call the heralds of the truce, and the envoys sent by our general Proxenos to the Phocians, Callicrates and Metagenes, and listen to the letter of Proxenos. *Testimony. Letter.* You hear, men of Athens, as the dates taken from the public archives are read and compared, and you hear the witnesses, who further testify that before I was elected ambassador, Phalaecus the Phocian tyrant distrusted us and the Lacedaemonians as well, but trusted Philip.'

(Aeschin. 2. 134–5)

The letter is referred to only as evidence for the date, while the witnesses attest to the main point at issue. A further letter of Philip, in which he calls the Athenians to join against the Thebans, and which is connected with an incident later on in Skirophorion in 346 BC, is mentioned in 2. 137. In this speech, thus, letters appear to figure mainly as elements of the case, and not as rhetorical weapons: Aeschines carefully builds his defence around dates and facts that he extracts from documents.⁵⁹

The other speech in which letters figure, alongside other documents, is the *Against Ctesiphon*, delivered in 330 BC. But the way they are used here is very different from *On the Corrupt Embassy*. Twice, letters are mentioned in connection with the Persian king: they function as markers of his insolence, and in both instances they are used to show how much the balance of power has changed. The first passage in which letters appear defines the power of Xerxes in terms of digging the channel through Mt Athos, bridging the Hellespont, and daring to write in his letters 'that he was lord of all men from the rising of the sun to its setting'; his power is contrasted with the actual situation of the Great King. The second reference functions in a similar way: the apparent power of the King (now Artaxerxes III) is encapsulated in his writing 'a most insolent and barbarous letter, in which everything was expressed in the most ill-mannered terms', and in which the king refused to give any gold to the Athenians.⁶⁰ The reversal is made manifest by the initiative of that same king, when in need of allies, to send Athens 300 talents, which the city wisely did not accept (but part of which, Aeschines continues, Demosthenes embezzled).

Letters are also used to subtly incriminate, or at least discredit, Demosthenes. Thus, Aeschines suggests that Demosthenes sent a letter to Alexander (γράμματα πέμψας, 3. 162) through a young, beautiful boy, and thus reconciled himself with the king of Macedon. The implication is that both instruments of communication

⁵⁸ On the historical background of the affair see Harris 1995: 54; Carey 2000: 139.

⁵⁹ See further Thomas 1989: 69–71; Bertrand 1999: 198–200. Demosthenes' scathing mention of Aeschines' activity as *ὑπογραμματεύς* (Dem. 19. 200), or the insult *γραμματοκύβων* ('someone who is hunched over records') hurled at him (Dem. 18. 209) show that Aeschines was perceived as being particularly familiar with written records, but also that such a familiarity could be construed negatively.

⁶⁰ Aeschin. 3. 132: οὐχ ὁ μὲν τῶν Περσῶν βασιλεὺς, ὁ τὸν Ἄθω διορύξας, ὁ τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον ζεύξας, ὁ γῆν καὶ ὕδωρ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας αἰτῶν, ὁ τολμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς γράφειν, ὅτι δεσπότης ἐστὶν ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀφ' ἡλίου ἀνιόντος μέχρι δυομένου, νῦν οὐ περὶ τοῦ κύριος ἑτέρων εἶναι διαγωνίζεται, ἀλλ' ἤδη περὶ τῆς τοῦ σώματος σωτηρίας; and 3. 238: κατέπεμψε τῷ δήμῳ καὶ μάλα ὕβριστικὴν καὶ βάρβαρον ἐπιστολὴν ἐν ᾗ τὰ τε δι' ἄλλα καὶ μάλ' ἀπαιδεύτως διελέχθη.

(the letter and the young, seductive messenger) are disreputable. More importantly, letters are symbolic of double-dealing, of hidden contacts: a few paragraphs later, Aeschines affirms that before the battle of Issus, when the situation was unclear and looking not too favourable for Alexander, 'there was not room enough in the city to contain your odious demonstrations and the letters that you carried around, dangling them from your fingers' (τὴν δὲ σὴν ἀηδίαν ἢ πόλις οὐκ ἔχῳρει καὶ τὰς ἐπιστολάς ἄς ἐξηρτημένους ἐκ τῶν δακτύλων περιήεις, 3. 164), although even then Demosthenes did not dare to take any action. The image is brilliant: Demosthenes is showing off his letters (i.e. his contacts) to the city; but these letters do not have any referent, they are not mentioned in any other part of the speech; the only purpose of this reference is to show Demosthenes glorying in the secret, private contact with a number of similarly private, powerful, and secretive persons.

This image must have struck a deep chord: the connection between Demosthenes and unsavoury letters will reappear in the speech that Dinarchus wrote against Demosthenes for the trial of 323 BC; here, however, the letters are mentioned in connection with events that took place slightly later (the revolt against Macedonian control coordinated by King Agis III of Sparta, between 333 and 331 BC):

ἐν τούτοις τοῖς καιροῖς Δημοσθένης τίς ἦν, ὁ τοῦ συμβουλευοῦσαι καὶ γράφαι κύριος καὶ φήσων αὐτίκα δὴ μισεῖν τὰ καθεστῶτα πράγματα; ἐγὼ γὰρ τοὺς ἄλλους κινδύνους. ἔγραφάς τι περὶ τούτων κινδύνων; συνεβούλευσας; ἐπόρισας χρήματα; μικρόν τι χρήσιμος ἐγένου τοῖς ὑπὲρ τῆς κοινῆς σωτηρίας πράττουσιν; οὐδ' ὅτιον, ἀλλὰ περιήεις κατασκευάζων λογοποιούς, καὶ παρ' αὐτῷ γράφων ἐπιστολήν, καὶ καταισχύνων τὴν τῆς πόλεως δόξαν, ἐκ τῶν δακτύλων ἀναψάμενος περιεπορεύετο, τρυφῶν ἐν τοῖς τῆς πόλεως κακοῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ φορείου κατακοιμώμενος τὴν εἰς Πειραιᾶ ὁδόν, καὶ τὰς τῶν πενήτων ἀπορίας ὀνειδίζων. (Din. 1. 35–6)

In that hour what was the behaviour of this Demosthenes who has the power to give advice and make proposals, and who will shortly tell you that he hates our present circumstances? For I shall pass by the other crises. On these matters, Demosthenes, did you offer any proposal, any advice? Did you contribute money? Were you of the smallest value to those working for our safety? Not the least; you went round suborning speech-writers. Writing a letter at home, and dishonouring the reputation of the city, he walked about dangling it from his fingers, living in luxury during the city's misfortunes, travelling down the road to the Piraeus in a litter and reproaching the needy for their poverty.

The similarity in the wording makes it clear that Dinarchus here had Aeschines in mind; again, there is much that is unclear or simply allusive slander in this passage. Particularly puzzling is the 'letter at home' allegedly written by Demosthenes: Dinarchus seems to be accusing Demosthenes of moving frequently and in an unnecessarily luxurious way between his houses in the Piraeus and his house in the city, and of doing this while holding in a conspicuous way a letter written by himself, so as to give the impression of being in touch with events and powerful persons much more than was actually the case.⁶¹ It may not be an accident that

⁶¹ The connection between Din. 1. 36 and Aeschines' description has always been noticed (e.g. Worthington 1999: 153). But no commentator addresses the question of the 'letter home, defiling the city's honour'. The emotional (rather than technical) import of the passage, and for that matter of the entire speech, is well brought out by Nouhaud 1990: p. xii, who points out that it was a *deuterologia*

the only other (rather cryptic) reference to letters in what we have of Dinarchus—admittedly not much—also comes from his *Against Demosthenes*: in 1. 27 the orator asks a clerk to read a Theban decree, to cite the evidence, and to read the letters. It is impossible to know what this refers to; but Nouhaud's suggestion that some epistolary exchange between Demosthenes and the Thebans is meant is plausible.⁶²

The image of epistolary exchanges taking place in the last days of Athenian independence will shape the later tradition. Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 20. 4–5, mentions letters sent by the king of Persia to his satraps ordering them to supply Demosthenes with money, something said to have afterwards come to Alexander's knowledge 'by certain letters of Demosthenes which he found at Sardis', and by other papers of the Persian officers, which accounted for the large sums that had been given him.⁶³ Plutarch also claims (*Dem.* 23. 2) that after the death of Philip in 335 BC, the orator sent letters to the Persian officers of the King, inviting them to attack Alexander. More interestingly, when pursued by the Macedonians to the temple of Poseidon at Calauria, Demosthenes obtained from Archias (his pursuer) some time to 'write a letter home' (*μικρὸν οὖν ἐπίσχες, ὅπως ἐπιστείλω τι τοῖς οἴκοι*, Plut. *Dem.* 29. 3); according to the biographer Satyrus, he would then have bitten his pen, which had been treated with poison. Now according to the version of the otherwise unknown Pappus, whose work was used by Hermippus (as cited in Plut. *Dem.* 30. 1), when Demosthenes fell by the altar because of the poison, a scroll was found, with the beginning of a letter, 'Demosthenes to Antipater,' and nothing more—would this have been the letter home?⁶⁴ Fittingly, vengeance for Demosthenes overtook Demades in the form of a letter of his addressed to Perdiccas, in which he had suggested that Perdiccas should deliver the Greeks from Antipater; when found, the letter excited the anger of Cassander (Antipater's son), who had Demades (and his son Demeas) executed (Plut. *Dem.* 31. 3).⁶⁵ The epistolary activity ascribed by the ancients to both Demosthenes and Aeschines fits the picture extremely well (as already mentioned, six letters of Demosthenes have been preserved; twelve letters have survived under Aeschines' name, none of them authentic).⁶⁶

(a second, supporting speech), and as such need not argue a case, but rather excite the anger of the citizens. For a reconstruction of this period see e.g. Cawkwell 1969.

⁶² Nouhaud 1990: 58, followed by Worthington 1999: 148.

⁶³ A piece of information known from this passage only.

⁶⁴ Further references and ample discussion in Bollansée 2002 (*FGrH (Continued)* 1026 F 51; while discussing the source of the story, Bollansée could, however, also have mentioned Jacoby's belief that Hermippus got the story from a Macedonian archive, the report made by Archias to Antipater: Jacoby *FGrH* 3b (Supplement) i: Text, 540–1 (*ad* Philochorus 328 F 164).

⁶⁵ In Diodorus 18. 48. 2 'letters' (in the plural) by Demades to Perdiccas are found in the royal archives by Antipater (not Cassander); Plutarch, *Phocion* 30. 9–10 has a slightly different version, in which the addressee of Demades' letter is Antigonus. Details of the affair, with full bibliography, in Paschidis 2008: 44–6 (the letter would have been found by Hieronymus of Cardia, who is undoubtedly the source from which all others derive, either in the archive of Antigonus Gonatas, or in that of Perdiccas; Hieronymus himself might have been the person who informed Antipater of the treasonous letter).

⁶⁶ On Demosthenes' letters see above, 272. Nine of the twelve letters ascribed to Aeschines were known to Photius (*Bibl.* 61) as 'the Nine Muses' (the speeches were 'the three Graces'), and may have been composed in Rhodes in the mid-second century BC; the others were added later. See Martin and Budé 1928: 121–2, with Goldstein 1968: 265–6.

To go back to Aeschines: the next mention of letters concerns those allegedly forged by Demosthenes to gain advantage over Aeschines:

‘I say nothing of forged letters (*Ἐπιστολὰς δὲ σιγῶ ψευδεῖς*) and the arrest of spies, and torture based on groundless charges, that I with certain persons was planning a revolution.’ (3. 225)

Indeed, Aeschines does not say anything else about these forged letters, and we may suppose that the Assembly did not know more about them than we do; they figure here simply to complete the picture of a man using all means at his disposal to reach his goal. Obviously, none of these documents is—or can be—read as evidence.

Forged letters had appeared at least already once in political Attic oratory. In discussing the rhetorical figure of *parasiopesis*, whereby a speaker affirms to pass over something while in fact stressing it, the rhetorician Rutilius Rufus gives the following representative example, taken from a speech of the orator Lycurgus:

in praesentia, iudices, iniusso populi quae improbissime gesserit, reticebo, de falsis eius litteris, quas ad senatum miserit, nihil dicam, quae illi saepe interminati sitis, omittam. nam et haec vobis nota sunt, et quae novissime multo indigniora commisit, quam primum cognoscenda. (fr. XV 7 Conomis = fr. 31 Malcovati = Rutil. Lup. 2. 11)

‘For the time being, o judges, I shall not detail the scandalous actions that he committed without the authorization of the people; I will not say anything of the false letters that he sent to the council; I will not remember the frequent interrogations you addressed to him; for these facts are known to you, and you must learn as soon as possible of the new much greater indignities that he has committed.’

The passage comes from a speech of Lycurgus, possibly that against Lysicles, one of the Athenian *strategoi* at Chaeronea; here, as in Aeschines’ speech, the mention of false letters serves its purpose, to blacken the character of the adversary, without any need of showing the letters in question. And this applies also to the last mention of letters in Aeschines’ speech *Against Ctesiphon*, a passage particularly important for the richness of its detail. Here is the text:

ἢ οὐ δεινὸν ὑμῖν εἶναι δοκεῖ, εἰ τὸ μὲν βουλευτήριον καὶ ὁ δῆμος παροράται, αἱ δ’ ἐπιστολαὶ καὶ αἱ πρεσβεῖαι ἀφικνοῦνται εἰς ἰδιωτικὰς οἰκίας, οὐ παρὰ τῶν τυχόντων ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τῶν πρωτευόντων ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ καὶ τῇ Εὐρώπῃ; καὶ ἐφ’ οἷς ἐστὶν ἐκ τῶν νόμων ζημία θάνατος, ταῦτά τινες οὐκ ἐξαρνοῦνται πράττειν, ἀλλ’ ὁμολογοῦσιν ἐν τῷ δήμῳ, καὶ τὰς ἐπιστολὰς ἀλλήλοις παραναγιγνώσκουσιν· παρακελεύονται δ’ οἱ μὲν βλέπειν εἰς τὰ ἑαυτῶν πρόσωπα ὡς φύλακες τῆς δημοκρατίας, ἕτεροι δ’ αἰτοῦσι δωρεὰς ὡς σωτῆρες τῆς πόλεως ὄντες. ὁ δὲ δῆμος ἐκ τῆς ἀθυμίας τῶν συμβεβηκότων ὥσπερ παραγεγραμκῶς ἢ παρανοίας ἐαλωκῶς, αὐτὸ μόνον τοῦνομα τῆς δημοκρατίας περιποιεῖται, τῶν δ’ ἔργων ἐτέροις παρακεχώρηκεν. ἔπειτ’ ἀπέρχεσθε ἐκ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν οὐ βουλευσάμενοι, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ ἐκ τῶν ξράνων, τὰ περιόντα νειμάμενοι.

(Aeschin. 3. 250–1)

‘Does it not seem to you terrible, if the *bouleuterion* and the people are being ignored, while the letters and embassies come to private houses, sent not by ordinary men, but by the first men of Asia and Europe? And deeds the legal penalty for which is death, these deeds certain men do not deny, but acknowledge them before the people; and they read their letters to one another and compare them. And some of

them ask you to look into their faces as guardians of the democracy, while others ask for rewards as being saviours of the city. But the people, discouraged by their experiences, as though senile or declared of unsound mind, preserve only the name of democracy, and have surrendered the substance to others. And so you go home from the meetings of your assembly, not having decided on a policy, but as from a picnic, having divided the leftovers among you.'

The private exchange of letters concerning affairs that should instead be discussed in the assembly is here presented as destructive of democracy.⁶⁷

In the two speeches by Aeschines in which letters are mentioned, then, two different strategies are at work. In his speech *On the Corrupt Embassy* a few 'normal' letters, the dispatches of the Athenian *strategoi*, are mentioned, and actually read. But it is not their content that matters; the letters are used for their date, in order to build a chronological argument. Otherwise, as in *Against Ctesiphon*, Aeschines associates letters with foreign rulers (Philip, the Macedonians, or the Persian kings) and with private, unsavoury dealings that are undermining the democracy. This time again it is not the content that matters—most of these letters are probably non-existent; it is the very existence of a correspondence that is deemed to be sufficient to provoke the anger of the people. In the public arena, the act of writing (or of receiving) letters can be used as a weapon against the opponent—all the more easily if the letters in question are not read. It is these negative connotations of letter writing, present also in some of Demosthenes' speeches, that had been at issue in Antiphanes' fragment.

6.5. ISOCRATES AND THE GENRE OF EPISTOLARY TREATISES

On at least two counts, Isocrates' oeuvre occupies a special place. Firstly, his orations present themselves as public speeches, incorporating, for instance, addresses to the audience, and adjusting to specific aspects of the genre; but their fictional character is often explicit (so for instance the *Antidosis*), and there is no desire to imitate spoken language: his speeches were always meant to be read in front of a public audience or in the presence of an individual.⁶⁸ This renders his work rather different from that of other orators. Secondly, he wrote a number of shorter pieces that have been transmitted as part of the *corpus Isocrateum* under the label of 'letters';⁶⁹ their authorship has been questioned, but most are now commonly accepted as genuine.⁷⁰ The *corpus* as it stands comprises twenty-one

⁶⁷ See already along these lines Lewis 1996: 148.

⁶⁸ Nicolai 2004: 24–6. The only speeches meant for a court are the forensic ones (16–21), which he wrote for others, as a *logographos*.

⁶⁹ The letters (1. *To Dionysius*, 2. *To Philip (1)*, 3. *To Philip (2)*, 4. *To Antipater*, 5. *To Alexander*, 6. *To the Children of Jason*, 7. *To Timotheus*, 8. *To the Rulers of the Mytileneans*, 9. *To Archidamus*) are in the manuscript tradition placed at the end.

⁷⁰ All early correspondence (e.g. the letters of Solon, Thales, Phalaris, Anacharsis, Heraclitus, and the Pythagoreans, and of Themistocles, Artaxerxes, Hippocrates, Euripides, Socrates, and the Socratics) is certainly a much later fabrication; pseudepigraphic are also the letters of fourth-century figures such as Xenophon, Diogenes, Crates, Aeschines, Chion, and Dion. The status of the letters of Isocrates, Plato, and Demosthenes is a matter of scholarly debate; some of the pseudepigraphic might be already

speeches (λόγοι) and nine letters (ἐπιστολαί); however, quite a few of the speeches present themselves as letters (*Busiris*, the speech *To Philip*, but also *To Demoniscus*), while conversely not all the letters correspond to the parameters of length and privacy established by later rhetoricians.⁷¹

Let us first begin with a look at the documents embedded in Isocrates' writings. Because of the peculiar character of Isocrates' oeuvre, it is not surprising to find no citations of decrees in it; references to the reading out of laws are also exceedingly scarce (they appear only in the forensic *Aegineticus*, at 19. 12–14, where the *nomoi* of the Aeginetans, the Ceans, and the Siphnians are read); a treaty and oaths are read out in *Against Callimachus* (18. 19–20). Letters are mentioned four times in speeches, twice in *Trapeziticus*, once in *Areopagiticus*, and once in *Philip*.

The first mention in the *Trapeziticus*, a forensic speech written for a young man from the Bosphorus in the late 390s, concerns a letter that was actually read out in the court, although its text has not been preserved: the letter was written by the king Satyrus of Bosphorus/Pontus to the city of Athens in favour of the speaker.⁷² This was thus a commendatory letter, a letter of patronage. The second reference comes at the very end of the speech, and it is not clear to what letters exactly the speaker here refers—letters of his father had not been mentioned previously, so possibly this simply alludes to the already mentioned letter of King Satyrus. Interestingly, once again the last word is with 'words':

It is also worth considering both Satyrus and my father, who have always esteemed you above all the other Greeks . . . ; also, in the private contracts in which they are arbiters, you come off not only on even terms but even at an advantage. [58] You would not reasonably, therefore, consider their letters of little importance (ὥστ' οὐκ ἂν εἰκότως περὶ ὀλίγου ποιήσαισθε τὰς ἐκείνων ἐπιστολάς). I ask you, therefore, on their behalf and on mine, to vote according to justice and not to consider the false assertions of Pasion to be more trustworthy than my own words. (Isocr. *Trapez.* 57–8)

The other two allusions to letters occur in epideictic speeches. One is in the *Areopagiticus*: in a passage in which he is contrasting the ancient grandeur of Athens with the current sad situation, the orator affirms that in ancient times the Greeks looked to Athens for protection, while the Persian King feared the city; now, however,

'As to the hatred of us among the Hellenes, you have heard the generals themselves; and what the King thinks of us, he has made plain in the letters which he has sent.'⁷³

fourth-century fabrications. The earliest letters we can be sure were kept and circulated seem to have been those of the philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BC): Trapp 2003: 12.

⁷¹ Nicolai 2004: 120 (one of the most accurate and perceptive discussions of the entire issue of genres and literary forms in Isocrates); Sullivan 2007: 7–8.

⁷² Isocr. 17. 52: 'When Satyrus had heard us both, he did not wish to render a decision concerning contracts made in Athens (περὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε γενομένων συμβολαίων), especially since Pasion was absent and not likely to comply with his decision; but he believed so strongly that I was being wronged that he called together the shipowners and asked them to assist me and not suffer me to be wronged, and having written a letter to the city he gave it to Xenotimus, son of Carcinus, for delivery (καὶ πρὸς τὴν πόλιν συγγράψας ἐπιστολὴν ἔδωκε φέρειν Θενοσίμω τῷ Καρκίνου). Please read it to them. Letter (καὶ μοι ἀνάγνωθι αὐτοῖς. Ἐπιστολή).'

⁷³ Isocr. 7. 81: καὶ περὶ μὲν τοῦ μίσους τῶν Ἑλλήνων αὐτῶν ἀκηκόατε τῶν στρατηγῶν· ὡς δὲ βασιλεὺς ἔχει πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ἐκ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὧν ἐπέμψεν ἐδήλωσεν. Note here the tradition according to which Isocrates would have written the reports Timotheus sent to the Assembly, discussed below, n. 75.

Reports of the generals (which may have been written or oral, but here are presented as oral: the impression the text gives is that the generals have just spoken) are put side by side with letters of the Persian king, in a context in which Isocrates speaks as though addressing an actual assembly.

There is no remarkable difference between these and the ‘fact-of-matter’ references to epistolary matters present in the speeches of the other orators. The last reference to a letter in a speech, however, is different. It occurs in *To Philip*: Isocrates there refers to a statement he has made in his letter to Dionysius (*Ep.* 1. 9), quoting part of the passage. Thus, in this speech, an earlier document sent to Dionysius of Syracuse is treated as a document in the public domain, supposedly known to the audience, and as an authoritative text, at least as far as concerns Isocrates and his reasons for approaching the powerful.⁷⁴

Let us now look at the ‘letters’. Nine attributed to Isocrates have been transmitted; more were known to the ancients.⁷⁵ Their function is varied: three of them are letters of recommendation (*Epp.* 4, 7, and 8); one is a short note to Alexander; most offer advice on political issues to important public figures (Dionysius I, Archidamus, Philip of Macedon). But the real nature of these texts is unclear: even in the case of the letters of recommendation it is uncertain whether they are truly private documents, or instead documents intended as examples for the school; this applies a fortiori to the other texts.⁷⁶ We face here an important issue: that of the diffusion and publication of Isocrates’ work. His oeuvre (including the letters) is very closely bound up with his school and his teaching activities. The question thus arises whether the letters were meant primarily for their addressees, for their addressees as well as for Isocrates’ pupils and circle, or only for the latter.

This is a question to which an overall answer cannot be given: some letters may have been simply school exercises; some will have been real letters meant also for circulation; some may have been purely private and may have been put together with the others after Isocrates’ death by his students. After a detailed discussion and a survey letter by letter, Nicolai concludes that we end up with more questions than answers.⁷⁷ And it is difficult to see how to break this impasse. For this reason, my discussion here will be limited to formal aspects, and no evaluation of the possible repercussions of the choice of the letter format for the discussion of important political issues will be attempted—although it is evident that this is a central issue.

⁷⁴ 5. 81: ‘And do not be surprised (as I also said in my letter to Dionysius after he had acquired the tyranny) that I, who am not a general nor a public orator nor in any other position of authority, have expressed myself to you more boldly than the others’, καὶ μὴ θαυμάσης, ἃ περ ἐπέστειλα καὶ πρὸς Διονύσιον τὴν τυραννίδα κτησάμενον, εἰ μήτε στρατηγὸς ὢν μήτε ῥήτωρ μήτ’ ἄλλως δυνάστης θρασύτερόν σοι διείλεγμαί τῶν ἄλλων. Incidentally, the letter to Dionysius is one of the three letters that are incomplete, presenting only a prooemium; this poses in an acute way the question of whether the letter circulated in this form.

⁷⁵ In his *Letter to Philip*, dated to 343 or 342 BC, Speusippus mentions ‘disgraceful letters’ (ἐπιστολὰς αἰσχράς) slandering Philip and his family, written to the demos by Isocrates in association with Timotheus (13). This finds an echo in [Plut.] *Lives of the ten orators* 4. 837c, according to whom the reports addressed to the Athenian assembly by Timotheus had been written by Isocrates, who received a talent for his pains. See Mathieu 1962: 163–4; Natoli 2004: 151–3.

⁷⁶ Sullivan 2007: 9. Cf. the comments of Speusippus, *Letter to Philip* 13, with Natoli 2004: 153–8.

⁷⁷ Nicolai 2004: 154–61.

The status of the nine texts at issue is made clear by the fact that Isocrates refers to them by the term *ἐπιστολή*, which is never used for self-definitions in the epistolary speeches.⁷⁸ Moreover, they present the main formal epistolary hallmarks: the recipient is addressed in the second person; and a prescript was probably present too.⁷⁹ Most letters lack closing greetings (the one exception is the letter *To Timotheus*, with its final *ἔρρωσο*, 'Fare well'); three letters (1, *To Dionysius*, 6, *To the Sons of Jason of Pherae*, and 9, *To Archidamus*) are incomplete, presenting only a prooemium.⁸⁰ But for the term *ἐπιστολή* and for the prescript—if indeed the letters had a prescript—the other epistolary hallmarks (mainly the address by an individual to another specific, named recipient) are, however, present also in some of the texts classified as speeches. And the reference in the speech *To Philip* to the letter sent to Dionysius implies that similar topics can be discussed in a speech and in a letter. So where did Isocrates put the distinction—if he did mark a distinction—between letters and epistolary speeches? A comparative analysis of his letters and speeches as well as a consideration of his own normative statements (usually made in a context in which he is infringing one of the rules he is formulating) offer some answers.

Concerning normative statements, the first and foremost is concision. It is highlighted in five letters, in general at the moment where the letter might risk going over the notional limit. The best instance is offered by the letter *To Philip I*:

πολλὰ δ' ἔχων εἰπεῖν διὰ τὴν τοῦ πράγματος φύσιν παύσομαι λέγων: . . . πρὸς δὲ τούτοις φοβοῦμαι τὴν ἀκαιρίαν: καὶ γὰρ νῦν κατὰ μικρὸν προΐων ἔλαθον ἑμαυτὸν οὐκ εἰς ἐπιστολῆς συμμετρίαν ἀλλ' εἰς λόγον μήκος ἐξοκείλας. (*Ep.* 2. 13)

Although I have much more to say, because of the nature of the subject, I will cease; . . . Besides, I fear the impropriety; for even now I have unawares gradually drifted beyond the due proportions of a letter and run into a lengthy discourse.

Here epistle and speech are put side to side, and the distinctive element is length.⁸¹ The second letter *To Philip* (*Ep.* 3.1), the latest, written after Chaeronea, may also be taken as implying the same, for it opens with the mention of a conversation between Isocrates and Philip's envoy Antipater, which led to Isocrates' decision to write to Philip about the course of action to be taken next. 'This advice is similar to that written in my speech, but it is expressed much more concisely' (*παραπλήσια μὲν τοῖς ἐν τῷ λόγῳ γεγραμμένοις, πολὺ δ' ἐκείνων συντομώτερα*); the speech is

⁷⁸ Nicolai 2004: 125, noting the exception of the letter *To Archidamus* (*Ep.* 9), whose authenticity is doubted; Sullivan 2007: 8. If one includes in the count also the verb *ἐπιστέλλω*, as Sullivan 2007: 8–9 does, then out of twenty-six overall instances, twenty-three refer to letters or to the sending of letters, while only three retain the older meaning of 'injunction, command'; all three appear in the *Trapeziticus*. The letter *To Philip* is also defined with *βιβλίον* (*γράμματα* appears for *To Timotheus* and *Rulers of the Mytilenaeans*).

⁷⁹ See Sullivan 2007: 9 for full discussion. The manuscripts of one family (the less important one) have the formula *ὁ δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι χαίρειν*; manuscripts of the other family give as the heading the name of the recipient(s) in the dative.

⁸⁰ The others give a sense of closure, but present no final greetings. See Sullivan 2007: 9–10.

⁸¹ The other passages are: *Epp.* 3. 1; 4. 13; 8. 10; and 7. 10, although there the reason for concision is not the risk of transgressing the limits of the 'genre', but rather the necessity to act quickly. Discussion in Nicolai 2004: 124; Sullivan 2007: 10.

Philip, written in 346 bc. Again, the same topic may be treated in letters and speeches, with length as the main difference.

Besides concision, there are statements to the effect that letters should be written in a simple style, not as *logoi*, but pleasantly; this corresponds to later epistolary theory, but there is no great stylistic difference between the language Isocrates uses in the letters and in the speeches. Finally, the value of epistolary writing can be inferred *e contrario* from apologetic remarks in which the writer stresses that he is writing because he cannot have a personal meeting with the addressee. The letter to Dionysius (*Ep.* 1) for instance begins by foregrounding epistolarity: distance is the reason that renders the writing of a letter necessary; had he been younger, Isocrates says, he would not have sent a letter, but would have travelled to Sicily to discuss the situation in person (*Ep.* 1. 1).⁸² Through all of the second and third paragraphs, Isocrates enumerates the reasons that render a face-to-face meeting preferable to sending a speech (his letter): it is easier to discuss the same matters face to face than to give one's views by letter;⁸³ men tend to trust spoken advice more than the written one, because the latter carries the marks of an artistic composition, while the former is more immediate; and, most importantly, if there is any misunderstanding, it can be cleared up in conversation, something that is impossible in the case of a written text or letter, for once the writer is not present, there is no defender.⁸⁴ Isocrates, however, manages to turn all this into a compliment to his addressee, who will be able to disregard difficulties and focus on the matter at hand.⁸⁵

This type of apologetic remark appears also in the letter *To Philip II* (*Ep.* 3. 4: 'if I possessed the same strength as before and were not utterly spent, I should not be speaking with you by letter, but in your presence should myself be spurring and summoning you to undertake these tasks'), and in a slightly different form (because generalized to all writing, in a way reminiscent of Plato's critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*) in the speech *To Philip* (25–9). So again, this motif can fit both 'letters' and 'speeches'.

The letters and some speeches seem thus to function in the same way. This can be confirmed by a quick look at the *Busiris*: among those texts classified as speeches, it is unquestionably the one closest to a letter. It opens with an address to Polycrates (a contemporary logographer, based in Cyprus, author of a *Defence of Busiris* and of a *Prosecution of Socrates*), couched in the form of an epistolary

⁸² εἰ μὲν νεώτερος ἦν, οὐκ ἂν ἐπιστολὴν ἔπεμπον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἂν σοι πλεύσας ἐνταῦθα διελέχθην. Cf. Livingstone 2001: 6–7.

⁸³ *Ep.* 1. 2: ῥᾶν ἂν τις παρὼν πρὸς παρόντα φράσειν ἢ δι' ἐπιστολῆς δηλώσειεν; note the contrast φράζω / δηλόω (δηλώω had been used for letters in Thucydides).

⁸⁴ *Ep.* 1. 3: ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἐπιστελλομένοις καὶ γεγραμμένοις ἦν τι συμβῆ τοιοῦτον, οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ διορθώσων: ἀπόντος γὰρ τοῦ γράψαντος ἔρημα τοῦ βοηθήσοντός ἐστιν. Here Isocrates is making a more general point: this touches writings sent (ἐπιστελλομένοις), but also writing *tout court*. Inasmuch as this is a general point concerning writing and not exclusively letters, it is close to the Platonic critique of writing as presented in the *Phaedrus* (275 E).

⁸⁵ *Ep.* 1. 3: οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ σὺ μέλλεις αὐτῶν ἔσεσθαι κριτής, πολλὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχω φανήσεσθαι λέγοντας ἡμᾶς τι τῶν δεόντων: ἡγοῦμαι γὰρ ἀπάσας ἀφέντα σε τὰς δυσχερεῖας τὰς προειρημένας αὐταῖς ταῖς πράξεσι προσέξειν τὸν νοῦν. Note that writing is here forgotten: Isocrates now speaks through his letter.

prologue.⁸⁶ Among the elements of epistolary writing present in the opening are the use of the verb ἐπιστέλλω (σοὶ μὲν ἐπιστεῖλαι, 2), the insistence on the fact that this is only a second-best solution for a direct, personal encounter, and the further statement that the choice of Isocrates has been dictated by his desire for sending his remarks to Polycrates privately, without sharing them with others (Isocr. *Bus.* 2). Here Isocrates is using the characteristics of privacy typical of the letter to present the fairly critical content of his speech as if it were disinterested advice; meanwhile, the audience (the readers of the speech) enter into a shared relationship of complicity with the author, through being allowed access to a private document.⁸⁷ After the scene has thus been set, the alternative (Isocratean) encomium of *Busiris* follows; but at 28 again a topos of epistolary literature appears, with the remark that 'If one were not determined to make haste . . .' (ἔχου δ' ἄν τις μὴ σπεύδειν ὀρμημένους . . .), a topos mentioned again towards the close of the speech (*Bus.* 44).

To the question of why *Busiris* was not classified with the epistles, three answers have been given: that it contains an encomium, and is thus better classified among Isocrates' encomia; that the other letters are addressed to powerful foreign kings or magistrates, and display Isocrates as the advocate of a Panhellenic idea: *Busiris* would look out of place in such a collection; and that it is too long for a letter (more than twelve pages, against some six apiece for the longest letters of the corpus, the second and the ninth).⁸⁸ For these reasons, then, the *Busiris* finds a place among the longer speeches addressed to an individual (*To Nicocles*, *To Philip*, *To Demonicus*, *Euagoras*), which also present epistolary features, although not as marked. Ideally, a longer treatment would be needed here; but what we have seen is sufficient to conclude that the main formal distinction is one of length—that is, there are no formal differences besides the length between an 'epistle' and a 'speech' in epistolary form; but also, that the form of the epistle was felt to have certain specific advantages (a faint notion of privacy and friendship) that could be exploited to colour one's speech, without the speech becoming, for that reason, an epistle.

This phenomenon has been traditionally discussed as part of a more general—and rather remarkable—contamination of genres and forms in Isocrates.⁸⁹ However, as pointed out by Nicolai, this is our way of looking at the situation: for Isocrates, and more generally for the ancients, the contamination of aspects typical of different genres is not felt as a transgression or an innovation.⁹⁰ Isocrates is simply experimenting, and using those rhetorical frames that fit the

⁸⁶ Livingstone 2001: 5–7.

⁸⁷ Nicolai 2004: 121; see also Sullivan 2007: 12, who points out that Polycrates is addressed in the second person singular no less than twenty-five times in this relatively short text.

⁸⁸ Livingstone 2001: 5–6.

⁸⁹ The *Antidosis* is possibly the more striking instance: it is presented as a trial, as forensic (Isocrates even asks for an indictment to be read—an obviously non-existent indictment (15. 29), besides having extracts from other speeches read), but the opening gives away the fiction: 'If the speech which is now about to be read had been like those produced either for the law-courts or for oratorical display, I should not, I suppose, have prefaced it with any explanation. Since, however, it is novel and different in character, it is necessary to begin by expounding the reasons why I chose to write a speech so unlike any other (15.1).' See on this speech Ober 2004; Too 1995.

⁹⁰ Nicolai 2004: 34, and more generally, 32–40.

situation best: a letter format for a short text; a mode of address close to the epistolary one, together with a careful avoidance of the word ἐπιστολή, which is felt to be out of place in an extended context, for longer texts, such as the *Busiris*, in which Isocrates wants to present what are very hard criticisms indeed (the conclusion shows it) as friendly, personal, and private advice while playing on the complicity of the public, who are made part of a private exchange; and a letter format for long texts, when he wishes to foreground physical distance, as in the letters to Philip and Dionysius. Above all, the epistolary format, in its strict meaning or in the extended one, allows Isocrates, under cover of apologies for the distance, the possibility of sending a type of writing that is closest to speech, including direct apostrophe of the addressee, a writing that presents itself as a personal and private exchange on a friendly level, but at the same time succeeds in avoiding face-to-face speech, and that can be circulated among a wider public. But such a strategy, I submit, may have worked also because Isocrates never directly entered the arena of the Athenian assembly (and there is remarkable disagreement as to the effective extent of his influence on Athenian, and more generally, Greek politics in the fourth century BC).

6.6. CONCLUSION

The evidence on the use of letters from the speeches of the orators has to be considered in both qualitative and quantitative terms; but it is also important to distinguish between public and private letters (and public and private speeches). To begin with the quantitative aspect: it is absolutely striking how very few private letters are mentioned (let alone read), when compared to other documents such as decrees, laws, contracts, and also witnesses' statements.⁹¹ However, if we move to the qualitative level, it transpires from forensic speeches that letters were indeed relatively frequent in private dealings, especially among merchants engaged in maritime trade. It is also to be expected that in a context of litigation quite a few of these letters should be 'deceptive'. In general, letters appear to have been used on all sorts of private occasions. So why was evidence from letters not used more? The reason must surely be that all other documents (obviously decrees and laws; but also testaments, contracts, and statements by witnesses) could be accepted as technically correct and reliable because written in the presence of witnesses; but the same did not apply to private letters, whose authenticity might always be doubted.⁹² The issue of preservation probably plays a role too: letters simply transmitting a message, a tip, some instructions, or a request, would not be

⁹¹ After 380 BC, witnesses make a written deposition, to be read out in the law court, without any possibility of modifying it or 'cross-examining' the witness. For a discussion of the role of the witness, see Harrison 1971, 133–54; Bonner 1905; important discussion in Todd 1990; Thür 2005. See *Ar. Rhet.* 1355^b35 for the distinction in artistic and non-artistic 'proofs', and *Ar. Rhet.* 1375^a24 f. for the division of 'non-artistic proofs' into νόμοι, μάρτυρες, συνθήκαι, βάσανοι, ὅρκοι (laws, witnesses' statements, agreements, statements produced under torture, oaths). Laws here must include decrees, while the agreements include all other written documents.

⁹² See along these lines Scafuro 2004: 4–5 and esp. n. 14. Written testaments too could be disregarded: see above, 82 and n. 81.

preserved. And if the letter did not exist anymore, if its evidentiary value was moreover doubtful, mention of it might have been made *en passant*, but it would not have made much sense to spend time on it.

Letters are quoted more frequently in deliberative speeches, because official letters would be kept in an archive—it would thus be possible to make use of them on a later occasion, while their authenticity would not be open to doubt; moreover, even if the letter did not exist anymore, capital might be made out of a mention of it, in a way that was impossible in forensic speeches. A qualitative analysis shows that letters were used for public service, in the form of reports sent by generals or embassies to their own polis; but at the level of interstate diplomacy (as well as in their relation with the cities under their control) the greatest letter writers by far are Philip of Macedon and the king of Persia. References to their letters are concentrated in a few important speeches. The letters are used as documents of a policy (when their content is at the centre of the discussion, they are read in their entirety), as archival documents permitting an exact dating of events, or simply to show, by the sheer number of references to them, the heavy-handed intrusion of a foreign power into the city's affairs. In this context, the act of writing letters (and at times the act of writing *tout court*) can be used as a weapon against the opponent;⁹³ this is particularly true when letters having implications for the entire community are privately written by common citizens—or when letters having implications for the entire community are privately sent to common citizens.

We see here the other side of the discourse of comedy. For comedy had linked letter writing to femininity, small talk, and private affairs, pairing it at the same time with the corrupt speech of the rhetors. Letter writing is something that belongs to the private domain; when it moves into the public space, it has to be kept under control.

Isocrates is one of the first instances of the use of the letter form for non-personal, and yet non-official, communication; with him, we are at the beginning of what will become a tradition of prose treatises clothed in epistolary form.⁹⁴ The comparison between his letters and his epistolary speeches shows that there is by now a clear sense of what exactly a letter is (or should be); but also, that the principal element distinguishing a letter from a written speech addressed to someone is length, nothing more.

From now onwards, letters will enter the public domain, and will be part of everyday life. Thus, they are cited among the instances of peculiar behaviour displayed by two of Theophrastus' characters, the 'boastful' or 'fraudulent' man (*ἀλαζών*), and the 'arrogant' man (*ὑπερήφανος*). According to Theophrastus, the fraudulent man boasts of non-existent possessions as much as of non-existent

⁹³ See above, n. 59, for Demosthenes' sneers at Aeschines' activity as public clerk. To the instances cited there (Dem. 19. 200 and 18. 209) add Dem. 19. 237, where the irony involves also Aeschines' brothers; 19. 314, which presents Aeschines as himself denying his past activity of undersecretary; 18. 127 (Aeschines as a 'poor devil of a secretary', *ὄλεθρος γραμματεῦς*), and 18. 261, where being a secretary is ironically characterized as 'the best job possible' *τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν ἔργων*. See also Scodel 2011: 81–2 for the famous passages from Dem. 18. 259 and 19. 199, in which Demosthenes recalls insultingly that Aeschines used to read the books for his mother when she did initiations.

⁹⁴ For a sweeping analysis of the use of the letter form in philosophy, based on the letters of Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus, see e.g. Gigon 1980; Wohl 1998 offers a detailed, fascinating discussion of the Platonic letters. There would be much to be gained from a contrastive reading of the two epistolary corpses (Isocrates' and Plato's), for they present some startling similarities.

connections: he pretends to have been campaigning with Alexander; he ‘will say that he has three letters from Antipater asking him to come to Macedon’, an invitation joined moreover to an offer to export timber without paying tax on it, which he refuses because of his alleged fear of sycophants.⁹⁵ As for the arrogant man, his fault lies in the disrespect for the forms of epistolary courtesy:

καὶ ἐπιστέλλων μὴ γράφειν, ὅτι ‘χαρίζοιο ἄν μοι’, ἀλλ’ ‘ὅτι βούλομαι γενέσθαι’ καὶ ‘ἀπέσταλκα πρὸς σέ ληψόμενος’⁹⁶ καὶ ‘ὅπως ἄλλως μὴ ἔσται’ καὶ ‘τὴν ταχίστην’.
(Theophr. *Char.* 24. 13)

And in sending instruction by letter, he will not write ‘I should be much obliged,’ but ‘I wish it to be thus and thus’, and ‘I have sent to you for’ this or that, and ‘that it may not be differently’, and ‘without a moment’s delay’.

The fact that Theophrastus adds written communication to the forms of behaviour that may express arrogance, besides direct speech or actions, shows how much letter writing has become part of everyday life. A similar joke on the omission of all forms of epistolary courtesy appears in the vignette of the character of the inconsiderate man (*αὐθάδης*) composed by Ariston, who followed Lycon, Theophrastus’ own successor, as head of the Lyceum in c.225 BC: the inconsiderate man, ‘in writing a letter, does not prefix it with greetings (*χαίρειν*), nor does he close it with a farewell’.⁹⁷ Clearly, there was a sense of what ought to be the content of a letter, and of how this content should be presented—the apologetic remarks in Isocrates’ letters prove the existence of generic expectations—as well as of ways to get round them. At the same time, the fact that Theophrastus mocks the boastful man for his pretensions at having direct access to the king of Macedon shows that there were tensions linked to the public exhibition of direct, private contacts between Athenian citizens and foreign kings: the boastful man reminds one forcefully in his epistolary behaviour of the sketch of Demosthenes ‘dangling letters from his fingers’ drawn by Aeschines and then Dinarchus; it also fits the context sketched in the analysis of the riddle proposed by Sappho in Antiphanes’ homonymous play.

Notwithstanding these tensions, from this point onwards, and throughout the Greek world, the elites will assume the role of intermediaries between the city

⁹⁵ Theophr. *Char.* 23.4: καὶ γράμματα δὲ εἰπεῖν ὡς πάρεστι παρ’ Ἀντιπάτρου τριττὰ δὲ λέγοντα παραγίνεσθαι αὐτὸν εἰς Μακεδονίαν. See on the passage Diggle 2004: 27–9 (for the historical context of this sketch and a dramatic date for it of c.319 BC), and 436; and the notes of Rusten 2002, *ad loc.* An *ἀλαζών* is a fraud, an impostor, as much as a boastful person; he is a typical character of new comedy.

⁹⁶ See Diggle 2004: 451–2 for close discussion of the text. *ἀπέσταλκα* normally requires an object, and the corrections *ληψόμενον* or, better, *ληψομένους* have been proposed (the latter finds a parallel e.g. in Xenophon, *Cyr.* 3. 1. 2; other parallels in Diggle, 2004: 451–2); but as Diggle points out, the lack of object may also be attributed to the shorthand style and the self-centredness of the arrogant man. Interestingly, some of the messages embedded in Herodotus presented such an ellipsis.

⁹⁷ γράφων ἐπιστολὴν τὸ χαίρειν μὴ προγράψαι μηδ’ ἐρῶσθαι τελευταῖον, Ariston fr. 14 Wehrli = Rusten 2002, col. 17. Ariston of Ceus composed a work *On Relief from Arrogance*, which contained sketches of characters; the work is lost, but fragments are preserved in Philodemus. See on him, besides Wehrli and Rusten, Diggle 2004: 9–10. Diggle compares with Plautus, *Bacch.* 1000 (‘non priu’ salutem scripsit?’), a good comparison, as these character sketches have to do with comedy; but also with Plut. *Mor.* 1035 B–C ‘those who propose decrees to the cities preface them with the words “To Good Fortune”’.

and the king—through embassies, but also through epistolary communication.⁹⁸ A story narrated in Plutarch's *Life of Demetrius* (thus concerning a slightly later period than that which has been tackled until now) well illustrates the difficult situation of the Athenians, trapped between the desire to refuse acceptance of letters emanating from a king (which at this time means orders), and the necessity of accepting them. According to Plutarch, a certain Cleainetus, one of the 'young friends' of Demetrius Poliorcetes, asked from the king a letter requesting that the Athenians cancel a debt of fifty talents owed by his father Cleomedon, and presented that letter in the assembly; the Athenians agreed, but then, exasperated, they also passed a decree that no citizen should bring a letter from Demetrius before the assembly. When Demetrius made his anger at this clear, the Athenians, frightened, rescinded the decree, condemned to death or exile its proponents, and passed another decision, that 'it seemed good to the Athenian people that whatever King Demetrius should ordain in future, this should be held righteous towards the gods and just towards men'.⁹⁹ Plutarch's narrative may have been embellished, and the exact chronology of the affair is uncertain; but surely the issue was not the refusal of any letters from a king—that seems an impossible notion, whatever the exact date of the story—but rather the refusal that any letters from a king concerning a particular citizen be brought by that particular citizen to the assembly.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Epistolary contacts in the context of embassies: cf. the decree for Hegesias (*I. Lampsakos* 4) discussed above, 169. For the role of the elites see Paschidis 2008: 469–70. Contact with the king could be initiated via letters: cf. Plut. *Arat.* 15. 4; Diog. Laert. 4. 39. The seal imprints found at Kallipolis show that the *strategos* of the Aetolian league kept archived in his house letters from (among others) the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, and the Attalids. See Paschidis 2008: 470–71 and n. 4, and specifically on the Kallipolis archive, Pantos 1996; Invernizzi 2004: 317–19.

⁹⁹ Plut. *Dem.* 24. 6–10: ... Κλεαίνετος ὁ Κλεομέδοντος, ὃς ὠφληκότη τῷ πατρὶ δίκην πεντήκοντα ταλάντων ἀφεθῆναι διαπραξάμενος, γράμματα παρὰ Δημητρίου κομίσας πρὸς τὸν δῆμον, οὐ μόνον ἑαυτὸν κατήσχυεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν πόλιν συνετάραξε. τὸν μὲν γὰρ Κλεομέδοντα τῆς δίκης ἀφήκαν, ἐγράφη δὲ ψήφισμα μηδένα τῶν πολιτῶν ἐπιστολὴν παρὰ Δημητρίου κομίζειν. [...] ἔτι δὲ προσεψήφισαντο, δεδόχθαι τῷ δήμῳ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, πᾶν ὃ τι ἂν ὁ βασιλεὺς Δημήτριος κελεύσῃ, τοῦτο καὶ πρὸς θεοὺς ὅσιον καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους εἶναι δίκαιον. On the affair see Paschidis 2008: 96–7.

¹⁰⁰ Paschidis 2008: 96–7 accepts the chronology implicit in Plutarch's narrative, and places the affair in c.303 BC, just before Demetrius' initiation into the Mysteries; De Sanctis 1893 [1966] 273 considered the Athenian reaction impossible before the battle of Ipsus, and thus dated the anecdote to after 301, when Demetrius' control over Athens was looser; a date c.294 BC was proposed by Manni; see Santi Amantini 1995: 347–8.

Poleis and Kings, Letters and Decrees

Official Communication in the Hellenistic Period

The analysis of the references to letters in the speeches of the orators has shown how complex and nuanced the connotations of epistolary writing are in fourth-century Athens: an everyday thing, when used for private exchanges between individuals or for official communications between the generals and the polis; a way of circulating ideas publicly, while presenting them as addressed to a specific individual; a treasonous enterprise, when information that should go directly to the assembly is conveyed by letters to individuals; and the typical means through which kings such as Philip of Macedon, and after him, Alexander, conduct diplomatic affairs with the Greek poleis. A certain diffidence towards letter writing is evident in the treatment of epistolary communication in tragedy, and similarly, the possibility of a misuse of the letter has emerged from the analysis of the fragment from Antiphanes' *Sappho*; but Antiphanes had left open the possibility of a correct use of letter writing (and of the rhetors' speech). The picture offered by the speeches of the Attic orators is similarly nuanced.

What of the following period? And what of the other Greek poleis? Is it possible to find in other types of documents a confirmation of what has been suggested? How did official letter writing actually function, and more generally, what was the formal shape of the documents through which interstate diplomacy was conducted? We have already seen some instances in the works of the ancient historians of the use of letters (by Greek tyrants and generals, oriental kings, Hellenistic kings, Roman consuls, and Carthaginian mercenaries). But rather than once again using literary sources, I propose to turn now to the epigraphic material. The advantages will be twofold. Firstly, inscriptions are possibly the only strongly polis-oriented type of evidence available, once we leave the Athenian drama and law-courts; thus they are our only possibility of getting an idea of how letter writing for official purposes was perceived in the various Greek communities. Secondly, inscribing a document on stone (as opposed to simply keeping it in the archive) means endorsing it in a strong way. Documents are not simply (or fundamentally) inscribed for the purpose of information, although they may be used for this purpose: an oral proclamation, and/or temporary inscription on a whitened tablet, together with an archive copy, would have taken care of that aspect. Rather, the inscription on stone inserts a decision in a very physical way into the landscape of the city; whoever sees the stone, without any need of going through the document, will be reminded of the process through which this

document—and all similar ones—are validated.¹ Not all documents were inscribed on stone, and not all official letters will have been either. Mapping the localities and the situations in which it was decided to publish an official letter on stone allows us to better understand an aspect of the ‘epigraphic habit’ of Greek cities, the reasons why some texts were published and others not, some on certain types of support and others on different ones, some in certain areas of the city and others in other areas, etc.² After all, the decision of the recipient(s) to have the letter inscribed, the reaction of the polis or the body responsible for its publication, are, for the purposes of understanding the connotations of official letter writing, almost as important and significant as the initial decision of the sender.

For these reasons, in what follows we shall look at letters on stone—or more precisely, following in the footsteps of a seminal article by Jean-Marie Bertrand, we shall look at the contrast between (and the distribution of) two specific types of official writing: the letter and the decree. For the type of language chosen by a state is not innocent: ‘une structure étatique révèle sa nature par la façon dont elle s’exprime’, the choice of the mode of communication reflects the constitutional context from which the document itself originates.³ The comparison between the functioning of the two forms will help illuminate their specificities.

7. 1. THE LANGUAGE OF ROYAL LETTERS AND CIVIC DECREES

Although the two types of document appear *prima facie* to be used in much the same way in interstate diplomacy, they present markedly different formal characteristics, and are couched in a relatively different language.

A decree is basically a long sentence including the date, the reasons, the approval of decisions taken, and provisions for their realization. There are of course minor variations from case to case, and even more so from polis to polis, but the basic features do not change.⁴ A typical Athenian decree of the fourth or

¹ For the localization of inscriptions at Athens, see Liddel 2003. The best discussion of the complex relationship between oral discussion, decision, publicity through a public proclamation (*κήρυγμα*) or exposition on a whitened tablet (*λευκωμα*), and inscription on stone is Faraguna 2006, who offers also an excellent discussion of the archival practices of the Greek poleis. See also Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 525–7.

² The necessity of paying attention to the ‘epigraphic habit’ of the various poleis (where ‘epigraphic habit’ comprises both the type of document being written, and the choice of place of publication) has become clearer in recent years: see Hedrick 1999; 2000; Osborne 2009; Liddel 2009. An early instance is Boffo 1995; but official letters are absent from the typology she sketches of the various documents emanating from Greek poleis.

³ Bertrand 1985; Bertrand 2006: 91 for the quote on language and the state.

⁴ Plat. *Gorg.* 451 c, where the formula *τὰ μὲν ἄλλα καθάπερ*, etc. is treated as typical of those who compose proposals in the assembly; *οἱ ἐν τῷ δήμῳ συγγραφόμενοι* shows that the decree was perceived as a specific form, with a peculiar language (see Dover 1981: 3). The same emerges from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, 257 E 1–258 A 9. Here, Socrates considers that the way the name of the proposer (in the formula ‘x said’) follows on the enactment formula (Resolved by the council and/or the people) is a mark of arrogance (*ἔδοξε’ πού φησιν τῇ βουλῇ* ἢ τῷ δήμῳ ἢ ἀμφοτέροις, καὶ ὅς ἐλεπεν—τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λέγων μάλα σεμνῶς καὶ ἐγκωμιάζων ὁ συγγραφεὺς—ἔπειτα λέγει δὴ μετὰ τοῦτο, ἐπιδεικνύμενος τοῖς

third century would for instance have featured the following elements: an invocation to the gods (*θεοί*), and possibly also a heading; a prescript, which would have included dating elements (name of officials, nature of the meeting, etc.), the enactment formula (*ἔδοξε* followed by a dative, e.g. *τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ*, 'It seemed good to (or: Resolved by) the council and/or the people . . .'), the name of the proposer(s) of the motion (*ὁ δεῖνα εἶπε*, 'X said'); the preamble or motivation clause, giving the background and the reasons for the motion (usually introduced with *ἐπειδὴ*, 'whereas', 'inasmuch' or *ἐπεὶ*, 'since'); there might at this point also have been a hortative formula (*ὅπως ἂν οὖν . . .*, *ἵνα οὖν . . .*, 'in order that . . .', 'so that . . .'); then, the resolution or motion formula (*δεδοχθαι* or *ἐψηφίσθαι* with a dative, e.g. *τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ*, 'let it seem good to (or: let it be resolved by) the council and the people . . .'), followed by the decisions, expressed with infinitive clauses depending on *δεδοχθαι*, or on the verb of the proposal; and finally, closing formulae, concerned mainly with the public inscription of the decree and/or sanctions for disobeying its provisions, as well as rider-formulae (eventual other stipulations and documents).⁵ The main characteristic of decrees is their impersonality. Through being written in the third person, the decree eliminates confrontation and brings forward the polis as a whole: the entire city, not a specific individual, stands behind the decree.⁶ There is no named addressee: the text is simply there. The proposal, which constitutes the one opening to individuality in the decrees, is, with its *εἶπε*, the recital of a story long past;⁷ the use of the aorist *ἔδοξε* (and of the perfect *δεδοχθαι*) in the enactment and in the resolution formulae renders the decision narrated an established fact endorsed by the entire civic community. Dover acutely pointed out that three persons are needed to produce the text that will be inscribed on the stele: the proposer of the decree, the secretary of the council, and the under-secretary (*ὑπογραμματεὺς*), a professional clerk; the three get together to write down the text, as is shown for instance by a passage of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (*ταῦτα μὲν φανερώς λέγω. | τὰ δ' ἄλλα μετὰ τῆς γραμματεὺς συγγραφέσθαι*, 'This I say openly. The rest I shall take down with the secretary', 431–2). But the verb used for that writing is always in the middle voice, *συγγράφεσθαι*, a verb used of copying down someone else's utterance, and never the active *συγγράφειν*, which takes as its object

ἐπαινέταις τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σοφίαν, ἐνίστε πάνυ μακρὸν ποιησάμενος σύγγραμμα). It is important to note that while Socrates' reference to the peculiar format of the decree is immediately evident to Phaedrus, his point about the arrogance is not; as Dover 1981: 1–2 states, this implies that the Athenians' perception of the decree would probably not have been, as Socrates submits, that of an individual praising himself.

⁵ See Guarducci 1969: 11–19; Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 3–7; McLean 2002: 215–27; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: pp. xix f.

⁶ Dover 1981: 1–2.

⁷ For the dialogue instituted between the proposer of a law and the assembly, between the *εἶπε* and the answering *ἔδοξε*, a feature that found in certain moments a visual expression in the separation of preamble and text (the 'perfect pattern'), see Bertrand 1985: 104 and n. 21, with further bibliography. As Liddel 2009: 423 points out, most Peloponnesian cities actually omit from their decrees the name of the proposer, even if the language is clearly modelled on the Athenian decree language. This anonymity may be interpreted in various ways; Liddel 2009: 423 suggests that it implies a less democratic mode of publication, because it takes away the emphasis from the free speech and deliberation taking place in the assembly.

something 'which is wholly composed by the person who is the subject'.⁸ Thus, the decree presents itself as the transcription of an act of the past, endorsed by the entire community.⁹ As pointed out by Robin Osborne, the gap created by the temporal structure of the 'genre' decree between the story of the decree itself and its actual performance is in fact a depoliticizing gap: the decree does not record (or script) a performance, it is an independent inscribed performance, a peculiarly democratic performance inasmuch as it showcases the democratic process of decision-making.¹⁰

As for official letters, a typical product of Hellenistic royal chanceries, they tend to be structured more loosely, depending on the specific issue at hand. In its most advanced form, a royal letter would have comprised the following elements: a prescript, in the form of a greeting, expressed by the name of the sender, that of the addressee in the dative, and the infinitive *χαίρειν* (formal titles being usually absent); sometimes, depending on the situation, a *formula valetudinis* (very rarely, mainly in letters internal to the royal administration, or in those of uncertain authenticity transmitted through literary texts), or a reminder of earlier relationships; then, the subject-matter of the letter; and a concluding clause (*ἔρρωσο*, *ἔρρωσθε*, 'be well', *εὐτύχει*, *εὐτυχείτε*, 'best wishes', or something similar).¹¹ The defining characteristics of letters are thus an opening with greetings in the third person, where both sender and addressee are named, followed by a text written in the first person, singular or plural, and addressing someone else (an individual or a group, with a second person singular or plural) directly and explicitly; letters often include a (brief) narrative of past events, but may otherwise be composed in the present or even future tense (barring the use of the 'epistolary past').¹² That kings should have chosen to write letters to communicate is not surprising: epistolography is a strongly personal mode of discourse; the choice of this mode corresponds to the fact that kings (or tyrants) conceive of their territory as their *πράγματα*, their private property.

The contrast between the two formats is evident. There are, it is true, in the fourth century and afterwards, some instances of mixed formats: they are mainly the result of non-Greek kings having to deal with Greeks. As far as I can see, the only instance of the welding of letter format and city decree is the text of the King's peace of 387/386 BC, as Xenophon reports it, which begins as a rescript in the third person and with no direct addressee, but then shifts to first person discourse.¹³ There are, however, other instances of the adoption of the decree-format by groups or individuals external to the polis. An inscription from Labraunda dated to the mid-350s BC, with which Mausolus and Artemisia grant proxeny to the Cretan city of Cnossus, offers an excellent example of such an adoption:

⁸ Dover 1981: 1–2.

⁹ Bertrand 1985, esp. 105–6. For a detailed study of this form of official language across the Greek world see Rhodes with Lewis 1997.

¹⁰ Osborne 1999: 357.

¹¹ See Guarducci 1969: 105–20; Welles 1934, pp. xli–xlvii; Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 7.

¹² On the tenses of Greek official letters see Welles 1934: p. lxx; Virgilio 2010 and Virgilio 2011: 37–69 for a survey of the style of Hellenistic royal chanceries.

¹³ Xen. *Hell.* 151–3, see above, 151–3. I am grateful to Peter Rhodes for calling my attention to this passage.

[ἐ]δοξε Μουσώλλωι καὶ Ἀρτεμίσῃ. ἐπειδ[ὴ] | ἔγνώσιοι καὶ ἰδίῃ καὶ δημοσίῃ[ι διὰ] τ[ε]λ[ους] | ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί εἰσι περὶ Μαύσ[σ]ωλλο[ν] ννν | καὶ τὰ Μουσώλλων πράγματα, εἴρα[ι] νν | 5 αὐτοὺς π[ρ]οξένους καὶ εὐεργέτας ἐ[σ] τ[ὸ]ν | ἀεὶ χρόνον. εἶναι δὲ καὶ ἀτέλειαν αὐ[τοῖς], | ὁπόσης Μαύσσωλλος ἄρχει, καὶ ἔσ[τ]λ[ο]ν | καὶ ἔκπλουν ἀσυλὶ καὶ ἀσποινδεί· ἐᾶ[ν] δέ τις | ἀδικῇ Κνωσίους, ἐπιμέλεσθαι ν | 10 Μαύσσωλλον καὶ Ἀρτεμίσιν, ὅπως ννν | μὴ ἀδικήσονται, κατὰ δύναμιν ν | τήν αὐτῶν. (Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 55 = *I. Labraunda* ii, 40)

Resolved by Mausolus and Artemisia. Since the Cnossians both privately and publicly have consistently been good men with regard to Mausolus and the affairs of Mausolus, they shall be *proxenoi* and benefactors for all time; they shall also have immunity, in as much territory as Mausolus rules, and the right to sail in and out inviolably and without a treaty. If anyone wrongs the Cnossians, Mausolus and Artemisia will take care that they are not wronged, as far as it is in their power.

The text opens directly with the enactment clause and two personal names, followed by the motivation clause, and then by the decisions in the infinitive. The decisions are verbalized in what appears to be a blend of the autocrat's language and the language of the Greek polis; yet, the display of power is here overt, there is no suggestion at all of a democratic process.¹⁴ The important point is that civic privileges and the civic language typical of the Greek poleis are here adopted by a Carian satrap, and blended with the forceful exercise of an individual, personal power, such as finds expression in official letters (note τὰ πράγματα, to define the territory under Mausolus' control: this is the term that will be used to denote the Hellenistic kingdoms; or the use of ἄρχειν for the land controlled, a term which on the one hand points to absolute power and on the other is used for civic magistratures).¹⁵ The reason for the adoption of Greek civic privileges and language is certainly to be found, with Gauthier, in the fact that Mausolus is addressing Greeks, and wants to be recognized as a member of the club: the honours attributed to the Cnossians serve the purpose of highlighting Mausolus' own Hellenism. A few years earlier the Erythraeans had awarded Mausolus, defined in their document by the ethnic 'Mylaseus', exactly the same honours: the titles of *euergetes* and *proxenos*, and the citizenship (*I. Erythrae* 8 = Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 56); they would do the same for 'Idrieus, son of Hecatomnus, Mylaseus' (*SEG* 31, 969). In designating Mausolus through his origin in a civic community, Mylasa, that is, in treating him as a Hellene, the Erythraeans certainly followed the satrap's own wish; in dealing with a Greek community, Mausolus adopted its formal language.¹⁶ A certain awkwardness shows that this text is something of an experiment (note especially the final sentence, beginning like a threat to punish wrongdoers, but turning midway into an attempt to prevent

¹⁴ Hornblower 1982: 75, stressing the brutal frankness; Gauthier 1985: 163; Bertrand 1992: 108 (who sees in this text an example of how in Asia Minor in the fourth century concepts of power are forged and elaborated that will form the basis of the Hellenistic kingdoms; note also his commentary on the difference between the Aramaic and the Greek text in the trilingual from Xanthos, 121–2).

¹⁵ Hornblower 1982: 75, who compares with Leukon of Bosphorus, speaking of himself as ἄρχων, and cites in n. 157 Tod's observation that 'with reference to his Greek subjects Leukon used the title of ἄρχων'; Gauthier 1985: 164 also compares with the Bosphoran kings.

¹⁶ Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 354. Note that the fourth-century tragic poet Theodectas wrote a *Mausolus*, which supported the (dubious) claim to Greekness of the Hekatomnids. Gauthier 1985: 164 compares the grants of proxeny by Paerisades king of Bosphorus (below), made over all the territory.

wrong being inflicted). As for the award of *proxenia*, it presents itself here as the opposite of the normal situation: instead of a community appointing a member of another state to act as their local representative or *proxenos*, here two individuals award the *proxenia* to an entire community. What is extraordinary here, however, is not so much the fact that *proxenia* is granted to a city (there are instances of the grant to entire communities), but rather that two individuals, one of whom a woman, feel themselves in a position to grant such an award (as well as exemption from tribute and security over all the territory they control), and choose to do so in the language typical of the Greek poleis.¹⁷

There are some other instances of kings or groups adopting formats and procedures typical of the Greek cities: Rhodes and Lewis list the case of the kings of the Bosphorus, who in documents dating to the mid-fourth century BC give *proxenia* to individuals (*CIRB* 1 = *Syll.*³ 217, cf. *CIRB* 2 and 3). Cassander in the last quarter of the fourth and Lysimachus in the third century make grants of land through decrees (and not through letters).¹⁸ At the very end of the fourth century, Berenice and her sons at Seuthopolis in Thrace blend together elements of a decree and of an oath in a text meant to guarantee the safe passage of a certain Epimenes, inclusive of his possessions, to Spartokos, in accordance with a promise made by Seuthes.¹⁹ Strikingly, after the invocation to *Agathe Tyche* and the statement that this is an oath, followed by the names of the parties, an ἐπειδὴ (line 2) introduces a motivation clause, followed by the resolution formula δεδόχθαι Βερενίκη καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς αὐτῆς, ‘let it be resolved by Berenice and her children’, lines 7–8. The editor adduces as the reason for this liberal use (‘freier Umgang’) of the language of Greek decrees the desire on the part of the person who styled it to give an official patina to the document, and at the same time to confer on Berenice and her sons the same authority as that of the decision-making organs of a Greek polis; in this context, he compares the appropriation of the language of the Greek polis by Mausolus and Artemisia some fifty years earlier.²⁰ Another striking example (and on this I will close) is that of the priest of Labraunda Korris, for it shows very well what could be done—and what was not done—by the Hellenistic royal chanceries. At Labraunda, in the mid-third century (250–225 BC), Korris and his *syngeneis* (here ‘associates’) drafted and published a honorary decree for someone whose name is lost:

[. c.34.] ι τὸν [. c.6. .] | [. c.23.] α ἰδίαι τε καὶ
 κ[ο]ινῇ [. c.5. .] | [. c.5. .] δεδόχθαι τῷ ἱε[ρ]εὶ Κόρριδι καὶ τοῖς [συ]γγενέσ[ι] τοῦ |
 [Κόρρ]ιδος ἐπαινεῖσαι τε αὐτόν, ὅτι καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς [γενέ]- | 5 [ν]ῆται εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ

¹⁷ On the awkwardness of the final sentence see Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 264, who also affirm that the award of *proxenia* to a community makes nonsense of the institution; but on this see Gauthier 1985: 162–4, with list of *proxenia* grants to entire communities; the objection should be rephrased as above.

¹⁸ Respectively Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 544; *Syll.*³ 332; and *SEG* 38, 619. There are, however, interesting nuances: the second text (Cassander) uses the present διδῶσι throughout (three times) for the present donation, while Lysimachus uses the past (δέδωκεν); both adopt the typical formula for the exemption from taxes.

¹⁹ Text, German translation, and commentary: Elvers 1994 (*SEG* 42, 661).

²⁰ Elvers 1994: 253–4 (detailed analysis of the various parts) and n. 44, with earlier literature, and the remark that associations (e.g. the Dionysiac artists) imitated in their decisions the style of the decrees of the Greek poleis.

ἀναγράψαι ἀντ[ὸν] πρόξενον [κ]αὶ [εὖ]- | ἐργέτην τοῦ τε ἱερέ[ω]ς Κόρριδος καὶ [τῶν
 συγγενῶν τῶν] | [τοῦ] Κόρριδος, στεφαν[ώ]σαι δ' αὐτὸν ἐν τ[ῶ]ι ἀ[γ]ῶ[ν]ι [χρυσῶι] |
 στεφάνωι ἄ[ρ]ετῆς ἔρεκεν κ[α]ὶ εὐνοίας, τ[ὸ]ν δὲ κήρυκα τᾶ- | [δε] ἀναγορεύσαι
 δεδῶσθαι δὲ αὐτῶι καὶ π[ο]λιτείαν καὶ ἔγ- | 10 [κ]τησιν καὶ προεδρίαν ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσιν
 εἶναι δ' αὐτὸν φυλῆς | [Ἰβ]ανύλλιος μετέχοντα ἱερῶν καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν πάντων νν? | κατὰ
 ταῦτα δὲ δεδῶσθαι καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνους αὐτοῦ· ἀναγράψαι δὲ τὸ {ψ} ψήφισμα ἐν τῶι ἱερῶι
 τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Λαβραύνδ[ου]. (I. Labraunda 11)

Privately and publicly . . . Let it be resolved by the priest Korris and Korris' *syngeneia* to praise him for having [been] honourable and good towards them and to inscribe him as a *proxenos* and benefactor of the priest Korris and Korris' [*syngeneia*], and to crown him in [the game] with a [golden] crown for his virtue and benevolence. Let the herald publicly proclaim this. Let also citizenship and the right of holding land and the privilege of a front seat at the games be given to him. Let him belong to the tribe of Ibanollis (?) taking part in sacred occasions and all other things. Let this also be awarded on the same terms to his descendants. And that the decree be engraved in the shrine of Zeus Labraundos.

Korris and his *syngeneia* (a group that had been formed by Korris himself) give themselves here the status and the authority of a city; a number of other associations will set themselves up in the same way. Yet, it is important to distinguish between categories, and between the reasons for the appropriation of the language of the polis. For the documents emanating from relatively peripheral kingdoms or from small independent associations, the assimilation of the language of a Greek polis not only was unproblematic, but could actually constitute a positive feature, inasmuch as it could add to the prestige and sense of finality of the decision. But the text of the King's peace, as given by Xenophon, or in a lesser measure the grants of land by Cassander and Lysimachus, cannot be read as the results of a desire to appropriate the authority and cultural status that went with the decrees emanating from Greek poleis. Cassander and Lysimachus were perfectly familiar with the Greek city-decree, but had to deal with a new situation;²¹ as for the King, one may wonder whether he would have been interested in dynamics of appropriation—the Achaemenids had a long tradition of dealing with very different subjects on the latter's terms, at least in part; but his authority was the main point, and the mixed format is possibly simply to be explained by the interference on the part of the Greeks in the redaction of the document (to repeat, this is the only document showing traces of interference between the letter and the decree—for good reason, since the letter is the typical oriental format for official communication, and the decree the typical Greek one).

Strikingly, notwithstanding these experiments and whatever the explanation for these new attempts, the language of the Hellenistic Greek royal letters consciously steers clear of some of the key terms used in the decrees of the poleis; and especially when considered against the background of the possibilities for

²¹ Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 544 further note that the same could happen with Rome: they refer to an edict of Caesar from Sardis, framed in the style of a decree of a Greek city (SEG 39, 1290. iii). Whatever the reason behind this choice, authority will not have been it. For the relations between kings and cities in Macedonia see the careful analysis of Mari 2006; Hatzopoulos 2006, with bibliography.

adjustments that we have just seen, this means that the difference between the two formats must have been keenly felt.²²

The best instance of the differentiation in the language of the two formats is offered by the (non) use in royal letters of the verb *δοκέω*, a staple of Greek decrees: it had been used by Mausolus and by Berenice, and there might have been scope for the use of some of its forms to introduce the decisions taken by kings. Yet, this verb is exceedingly rare: out of seventy-five royal inscriptions recorded by Welles, only five documents use a form of *δοκέω*.²³ Of these five, the first is a long letter sent by Antigonos to all Greeks (we only have the copy sent to Scepis), announcing the peace concluded with Cassander, Lysimachus, and Ptolemy in 311 BC (Welles RC 1). Here, forms of *δοκέω* appear three times, at the very end of the document (ll. 65 and 70), after a long narrative in which Antigonos recounted the events. They frame the actual request for all Greeks to swear an oath that they would help each other to preserve a common freedom, an oath that, Antigonos says, 'we see as neither discreditable nor disadvantageous for the Greeks; therefore it seems to me best for you to take the oath which we have sent' (*οὐκ ἄδο- | ξον οὐδὲ ἀσύμφερρον τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν ἐωρώμεν | ὄν. καλῶς δὴ μοι δοκεῖ ἔχειν ὁμόσαι ὑμᾶς | τὸν ὄρκον ὃν ἐπεστάλκαμεν*, 63–6). After a further remark in the first person plural (*πειρασόμεθα δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸ λοιπὸν . . .*, 'In the future also we shall try to provide both for you and the other Greeks whatever advantage we have in our power'), Antigonos concludes (ll. 69–72):

ὑπὲρ δὲ τούτων καὶ γράψαι μοι | ἐδόκει καὶ ἀποστεῖλαι Ἄκιον διαλεξόμε- | νον· φέρει δὲ ὑμῖν καὶ τῆς ὁμολογίας ἣς πε- | ποίημεθα καὶ τοῦ ὄρκου ἀντίγραφα. ἔρρωσθε.

It seemed best to me then to write you also about these matters and to send to you Acius to speak further on the subject. He brings you copies of the treaty which we have made and of the oath. Farewell.

This is not worded as an order—the letter was a proclamation addressed to the entire Greek world, a clever propagandistic stroke.²⁴ The order was in fact part of the treaty agreed upon; Antigonos here appears to express a wish (note that *δοκέω* does not directly govern the infinitive expressing the actual request, but a *καλῶς ἔχειν* that in turn governs the request to take the oath). This also explains the sudden switch to the first person singular (*μοι* twice, both times in connection with *δοκέω*): while in the rest of the document Antigonos speaks in the first person plural, in part also to include the other kings, here he expresses his personal opinion.²⁵

²² This is not to deny that the two groups interacted, the letters of the one being the answer to the embassies and decrees of the other, nor to deny that the two 'formats' shared in a common 'language of euergetism', made of accepted key terms recognized as typical of each party: illuminating discussion in Ma 1999: 182–94; Mari 2009.

²³ Since Welles's publication (1934) numerous other royal letters have been found—their number has probably doubled. The lack of an updated corpus makes it difficult to extend the analysis to all royal letters; but there is no reason to expect a different distribution. Meanwhile, for a more detailed analysis of some distinctive features of royal epistolary language see Bencivenni 2011; Ceccarelli forthcoming *a* and *b*.

²⁴ See Welles 1934: 6–8.

²⁵ Welles 1934: 10. In the entire document, Antigonos uses the first person singular three times only: at l. 25, an incidental remark: 'what zeal we have shown (*πεποίημεθα*) in these matters will I think be evident (*φανηρόν οἶμαι ἔσσεσθαι*) to you and to all others from the settlement itself'), and the two

The second instance of *δοκέω* for a royal decision is in the second (RC 4) of two letters of Antigonos to Teos, both concerning the proposed synoecism of Teos with Lebedos, dated to between 306 and 302 BC. Discussing the style of these letters, Welles highlights the affinity in details to the previously discussed one, concluding that it is very likely that Antigonos himself had a hand in the composition of all of them; the two letters from Teos show occasional shifts to a more personal and direct form of expression, just like the one sent to Scepsis.²⁶ Although the content of both RC 3 and 4 definitely consists in orders, ‘the royal will is expressed as if it were opinion (*ωιόμεθα δεῖν* usually; *υπολαμβάνομεν* in ll. 30 and 93), or as if the king were an arbitrator (cf. *ἐπικεκρίκαμεν*, l. 60).’²⁷ In RC 4 in particular, the order was probably expressed with [... *ἡμῖν οὖν καλῶς δοκ*]*εἶ ἔχειν* (ll. 7–8), that is, through a use of the verb *δοκέω* that does not strictly correspond to the language of the decrees.

After these two examples, there is a huge chronological gap: evidently the Hellenistic royal chanceries developed an independent language appropriate to the new situation—or the instances just discussed were a consequence of Antigonos’ own personal style.²⁸ *δοκέω* next occurs in two letters of Eumenes of Pergamum—and it is not actually used for royal decisions. The first letter (RC 52) is addressed to the Ionian league, and is dated to 167/166 BC; there the term is used for the decision of the Ionian league to honour the king (*διόπερ ἔδοξεν ὑμῖν... στεφανῶσαι μὲν ἡμᾶς...*, RC 52. 23). This decision Eumenes recounts in great detail (unsurprisingly), before reacting to it and accepting the honours, a resolution expressed with *τά τε τίμια φιλο[φρόνως ἀποδέ]- | χομαι...* (‘The honours I accept kindly...’, RC 52. 41–2). This letter constitutes thus one instance of the king’s inserting into his own document the text approved by the League, appropriating it for his own greater glory. The second letter by Eumenes where a form of *δοκέω* appears is a long document dated to the mid-second century addressed to the guild of Dionysiac artists and aiming at resolving their dispute with Teos. *δοκέω* is used in column 2B, not for any decision, but simply to state the impression that the king has formed of the situation and on the basis of which he will decide:

καί τὰ μὲν ὀλοσχερῇ πρὸς τὴν | ἀμφισβήτησιν ἣν ἔδόκει μοι διάνοιαν ἔχειν καὶ | ἀφ’ ἧς αἰτίας ἕκαστα συνσταθῆναι ταῦτ’ ἐστίν. (RC 53, IIB ll. 7–9, Le Guen 2001 no. 47)

This then it seems to me is the meaning of the general issues which have led to the dispute and the cause from which each arose.

The last instance allows us a glimpse of a royal ‘private’ correspondence: it is a letter sent around 156 BC by Attalus II to Attis, the priest of the temple of Cybele at

occurrences of *μοι* here. This is not to say that the present text does not represent a final decision; but it is not couched as one.

²⁶ Welles 1934: 32.

²⁷ Welles 1934: 26, on the first letter (RC 3). It is interesting to notice that Antigonos, who expresses his commands in this way, also uses it for the opinion (indeed, this time) of the envoys from Teos in RC 3 l. 56, while for the ambassadors of the Lebedians *ἀξιόω* is used. *δοκέω* is also used in RC 3 l. 33 (omitted from Welles’s index), not for command, but to mean simply ‘it does not seem that’ (and there is no dative).

²⁸ This should be integrated with a discussion of the Macedonian *διάγραμμα*, and an analysis of the language of the decrees/*διαγράμματα* of Alexander. See meanwhile Mari 2006: 210–13; Hatzopoulos 2006: 75–96; Mari forthcoming.

Pessinus (RC 61), and is part of a correspondence that was certainly not meant to be inscribed, since it deals with vital information; as Welles notes in discussing this dossier, ‘in most cases the real messages between king and priest were carried orally by messengers. The written word might incriminate, and was liable to interception, but the spoken word was a secret as the faith of the messenger.’²⁹ Those letters that were sent were kept, however, in an archive, and inscribed with other documents of the same group more than a century after the events to recall the earlier glories of the temple. Here, too, the *περὶ ὧν ἔδοξεν ἡμῖν* (‘concerning what we resolved’, l. 6) concerns not an official decision, but a private one taken at an earlier meeting between the king and the priest; this private decision the king reported to his friends, who discussed it with him and in the end convinced him to change his mind. The final decision is thus announced at line 20: ‘I thus decided’, *ἔκρινον οὖν* . . . If out of the seventy-five royal letters collected by Welles only the two letters sent by Antigonos use a form of *δοκέω* in order to express an official decision, this implies, I suggest, a conscious avoidance of the term on the part of the chanceries.³⁰

A look at the attestations in this corpus of the other term that is a staple of the idiom of Greek decrees, namely the conjunction *ἐπειδὴ* (‘whereas’, ‘since’) that typically introduces the motivation clause, leads to the same conclusion. There are all in all only four instances of *ἐπειδὴ*; *ἐπεὶ*, the other term that may introduce such a clause, is slightly more frequent (ten instances); but not all of these are used for motivation—in fact, very few.³¹ In this case, the avoidance by the chanceries of a formal motivation clause is probably due to the ideological desire to present the decision of the king as free, or due to the king’s own personal considerations, rather than resulting from any one event. I take only one instance, RC 44. 21, a letter of Antiochos III to a governor concerning the appointment of a chief-priest at Daphne, written in 189 BC. This is the context in which *ἐπειδὴ* appears:

We shall take care that in the future he will receive all that pertains to honour and glory, for (*ἐπειδὴ*) as the chief-priesthood of Apollo and Artemis Daïtiae and of other sanctuaries whose precincts are in Daphne requires a man devoted to us and competent to fill it suitably in view of the interest both our ancestors and ourselves have had in the place and of our own reverence towards the gods, we have appointed him chief-priest of these sanctuaries in the conviction that their administration will be carried out properly by him. (RC 44, 18–31, Welles’s fairly literal translation)

²⁹ Welles 1934: 246. On this letter as ‘private’ correspondence see Savalli 2003; Ceccarelli forthcoming *a*. Contra, Virgilio 2011: 49–50 and 57.

³⁰ Outside the corpus of Welles, a royal decision taken with *ἔδοξε* is recorded in the letter of Antiochos III to Zeuxis quoted by Josephus, *AJ* 12. 148–9—but this is a problematic document, and embedded in Josephus’ text (see Savalli 2003; Ceccarelli forthcoming *a*). The language of the ordinances of the Ptolemies, collected in Lenger 1980², confirms the analysis proposed: *εἰ δοκεῖ* (or *ἐὰν δοκῇ*) appears three times in the *Corpus des ordonnances des Ptolémées*, always in requests addressed to the kings, with the meaning ‘if you please’ (in 58. 17, request of the priests of Chnum, dated to 115 BC, and repeated twice in 62. 16 and 19, and 63. 11 and 15, a request of the great embalmer at the Sarapeion of Memphis, dated to 99 BC); no form of *δοκέω* ever appears in documents emanating from the king.

³¹ *ἐπειδὴ* occurs in RC 3. 79 and 44. 21 not in the context of a motivation clause; and at RC 7. 9 and 15. 21 for something that may look like a motivation clause. *ἐπεὶ* occurs in RC 1. 13 and 16; 3. 31 and 86; 21. 6; 36. 17; 54. 8; 60. 9; 65. 11 and 15; 67. 1; 73. 3; 75. 1. In the letter of Eumenes to Toriaion (*SEG* 47, 1745, 39–43) *ἐπειδὴ* introduces as motivation an earlier decision of the king; see Ceccarelli forthcoming *b*.

ἐπειδὴ is followed by a long clause in the genitive absolute, stating the specific needs to be covered through the appointment; but formally the motivation is the king's action of having nominated a priest (ἐπειδὴ . . . ἀποδεδείχαμεν), and not any independent merits on the part of the priest concerned!³²

The two forms of diplomatic language could have lived side by side without any difficulties as long as the poleis preserved their independence; but, as pointed out by Bertrand, the situation changed radically when the letter became the normal means of communication of a king situated outside the polis, but expecting that his orders would be followed and obeyed by the polis, and for this reason addressing the polis directly in his writing.³³ Now, the polis had to find strategies to integrate into its landscape this deeply extraneous form of discourse. Various approaches could be taken: a polis could refrain altogether from inscribing a royal letter—unless the king explicitly required that it be inscribed, or unless the letter granted some privileges, for in the latter case, it might have been in the interests of the city to inscribe the document.³⁴ Apart from silence, various ways of dealing with the royal text are attested.

The polis could publish the royal letter before, or after, a related city decree (the one sent to the king, to which the letter was the response, or one proclaimed by the polis in response to the letter). Thus the inhabitants of Seleucia in Pieria and their epistates Theophilus reacted in 186 BC to the request expressed in a letter from Seleucus IV that the bronze statue with which he was honouring his 'honoured friend' Aristolochus be erected in their city, by inscribing a long decree of twenty-seven lines, in which they expressed their acquiescence in the royal request and granted citizenship and a place for the statue to Aristolochus; they then inscribed below their own decree also the letter of the king.³⁵ Sometimes the royal letter is lost, but the text of the decree shows that the letter had been inscribed below, or above, as in the case of a fragmentary decree of Telmessos (but found in Cos) dated to c.220 BC, where the first four preserved lines state that

[ἐ]κκλησίας κυρίας γενόμεν[ης] | καὶ γράψαντος Λυσιμάχο[υ τὴν] | προγεγραμ<μ>ένην
ἐπιστολήν, | ἔδοξε Τελμεσσέων τῇ πόλει[ι]. (Segre I. Cos ED 56)

³² That the nominee had been a valuable friend of the royal house had been mentioned in the opening of the letter. Welles 1934: 182–5 offers a detailed analysis of the overall structure of the letter. Again, the ordinances of the Ptolemies confirm the tendency to avoid direct causality. (There is only one instance of ἐπειδὴ, in a letter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus to Apollonius dated to 259 BC, Lenger 1980², no. 23; there are four instances of ἐπεὶ, in Lenger 1980², no. 45. 7, where the meaning is not causal; in no. 52. 22, a letter addressed by priests to the Ptolemy Euergetes, his sister Cleopatra, and his wife Cleopatra; and in nos. 53. 85 and 54. 8, two collections of ordinances and amnesties by Ptolemy Euergetes II, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III).

³³ Bertrand 1985: 110: 'Ce qui est rare [the letter] dans le monde des cités et ne pose guère de problèmes véritables, ne l'est plus quand la lettre est le mode de communication ordinaire de la part d'un souverain situé par nature hors de la polis, qui compte pourtant bien que ses ordres y seront reçus et suivis.' For the situation in Macedonia, I once again refer to Mari 2006; see also Mari forthcoming.

³⁴ We touch here on one of the difficulties raised by the documentation: any dossier will inevitably be skewed, and not just because of the accidents of preservation, but because various groups, states, and individuals had an interest in whatever was inscribed, and would have tried to highlight some aspects and to hide others. Bencivenni 2010 is a fascinating recent discussion of the position of the cities of Asia Minor concerning the inscription of letters from the King.

³⁵ RC, no. 45; cf. Wörrle 1978: 203 n. 1.

at the meeting of the main assembly, and since Lysimachus had sent the letter above inscribed, it seemed good to the polis of the Telmessians. . . .

Alternatively, the polis could simply summarize the royal letter in the course of its own decree, or give the gist of the letter in the decree, and publish the text as well, preceding or following the decree. A remarkable instance is offered by a decision taken by the city of Miletus in answer to a letter of Ptolemy II, dated to c.262 BC: first on the stele came the royal letter (fifteen lines: βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Μιλησίων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν . . . ἔρρωσθε, 'King Ptolemy to the council and the demos of the Milesians, greetings . . . Farewell'); this was followed by a short text (ll. 16–21) in which the assembly decided that the letter should be read, and then a decision taken, after consultation, if required, with the person who had brought it,³⁶ finally came the decision of the city concerning the letter, comprising thirty-seven lines (from ll. 22 to 59), of which nineteen were dedicated to a detailed summary of the royal letter and of what the ambassador had said (from ll. 23 to 42). The inscription thus begins with the letter—which in a sense is correct, since it is the arrival of the letter that had caused all subsequent events; it then relates what happened when the letter arrived, and closes with a long city narrative, which includes the decision to inscribe it (the king had not asked for this), and to send ambassadors to the king, to bring him copy of the decree.³⁷

The third possibility is basically a variant of the previous one, consisting in the insertion of the royal letter in the city decree, by literally quoting it. The best example of this kind of response is offered by an inscription from Telmessos dated to 279 BC: the text begins as expected, with the date and the mention of an assembly (ἐκκλησίας κυρίας γενομένης); it seamlessly goes on, with another participle in the genitive absolute coordinated with the preceding one, to mention the reading out of the royal letter (καὶ τῆς παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπιστολῆς ἀναγνωσθείσης), and then branches out into the royal message, with 'in which it was written' (ἐν ᾗ ἐγέγραπτο) followed directly by the text of the letter: Βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Τελμεσσέων τῇ πόλει καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσι χαίρειν . . . Ὅπως οὖν εἰς δωρεὰν μὴ καταχωρίζησθε, τοῖς τε παρ' ὑμῶν ἐξωμολογησάμεθα καὶ πρὸς τοὺς περὶ Φιλοκλῆν καὶ Ἀριστοτέλην γέγραπται. Ἐρρωσθε ('King Ptolemy to the city and the archons of Telmessos greetings . . . That you are not to be assigned as gift we have agreed with your representants, and it is stated in writing to Philokles and Aristoteles. Farewell'). The decree resumes with the expected motivation clause, ἐπειδὴ βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Πτολεμαίου ἐπεχώρησεν . . . , 'Whereas king Ptolemy son of Ptolemy has granted . . .'³⁸ In 217 BC the people of Larisa dealt in exactly

³⁶ Milet i, 3, 139B (cf. RC, no. 14): [ἐ]δοξε τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ γνώμῃ ἐπιστατῶν. Ἐπαμείνων Ἐστιαίου εἶπεν | [τ]ὰ μὲν γράμματα, ἃ ἐκόμισεν Ἡγέστρατος παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου[v] | [ἐ]πενεγκεῖν τὸν γραμματέα τῆς βουλῆς εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τῇ τετράδι ἀ[ο]- | [μ]ένου τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος μην[ος κ]αὶ ἀναγνῶναι τῷ δήμῳ, ἐπαγαγεῖν δὲ καὶ | 20 [Ἡ]γέστρατον τοὺς ἐπιστ[άτ]α[s] ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, τὸν δὲ δῆμον ἀκούσαντ[α] | [β]ουλευσάι τὰ δοκοῦντα συνοίσειν. Cf. Wörle 1978: 203 n. 1, with other instances.

³⁷ As Welles 1934: 73–4 points out, it is clear that there had been difficulties in Miletus at this time, and the 'overdoing' here may be connected to the situation.

³⁸ SEG 28, 1224, see Wörle 1978: 201–3, who comments: 'Das Schema ist so consequent durchgehalten, daß der ganze Text sich zu einer einzigen Periode zusammenschließt, die der Redaktor freilich nicht ohne Mühe gemeistert zu haben scheint, wie man an dem Nebeneinander des einleitenden absoluten Genetivs und der resümierenden ἐπειδὴ-Konstruktion sieht, das wegen des Ausfalls der auch

the same way with two letters of Philip V, possibly the most significant instance of an attempt at integrating a royal letter into a city decree and of the difficulties posed by such an integration. In Larisa too, the text of the royal letters is cited directly after the prescript with the dating elements.³⁹

Finally, a city could play on the location. This is the case of a fascinating decree from Delphi concerning the request of *asylia* (inviolability) made by Smyrna in 244 or 242 bc. In the motivation formula, the Delphians acknowledged the reception of a letter from Seleucus son of Antiochus in which the king asked that the temple of Aphrodite Stratonikis and the city of Smyrna be sacred and inviolable, 'he himself (the king) having previously obeyed the oracle of the god' and having already done what he was now asking the Delphians to do; the request was reinforced orally by ambassadors from Smyrna, who 'also ask, as does the king as well, that what has been granted to them be inscribed in the temple' (ἀναγραφῆμεν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, ὥσπ[ερ καὶ] | ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀξιοῖ, τὰ ἐπικεχωρημένα αὐτοῖς). The decision of the Delphians followed:

δεδοχθαι ταῖ πόλει τῶν Δελ- | φῶν τό τε ἱερὸν τὸ τὰς Ἀφροδίτας τὰς Στρατονικίδος καὶ
τὰμ πόλιν τῶν [Σμυρ]- | ναίων ἱερὰν καὶ ἄσυλον εἶμεν, καθάπερ ὃ τε βασιλεὺς
ἐπέστελκε [καὶ] | ἃ τῶν Σμυρναίων πόλις ἀξιοῖ, ἐντέλῃσθαι δὲ καὶ τοῖς θεωροῖς
τοῖς τὰ | 15 Πύθια ἐπαγγελλόντοισ ἐπαινέσαι τὸν βασιλέα Σέλευκον ἐπὶ τε τοῖς
| καὶ ταῖ εὐσεβείαι καὶ ταῖ ἐπακολουθηκέναι τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ χρησμῷ, | καὶ θῆσαι ταῖ
Ἀφροδίταν· ἀναγράψαι δὲ τὸ μὲν ψάφισμα τόδε τὰν πόλιν | ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, τὰν δ'
ἐπιστολὰν ἐν τῷ ἀρχεῖῳ ἐν τῷ τοίχῳ. (Fouilles de Delphes III, 4. 153, cf. Rigsby
1996, no. 7)

Let it be resolved by the city of the Delphians that the sanctuary of Aphrodite Stratonikis and the city of the Smyrnaeans be sacred and inviolable, just as the king has sent and the city of the Smyrnaeans asks; that it be enjoined to the *theoroi* who will announce the Pythia to praise the king Seleucus for these actions and for his piety and for having followed the oracle of the god, and that they sacrifice to Aphrodite; that the city inscribe this decree in the sanctuary of the god, but the letter in the archive on the wall.

As Rigsby notes, the civic decree is inscribed 'in the temple' as the king and Smyrna had asked (or to be precise on the back of the temple); this is the text we have. The Delphians, however, decided to publish the lost royal letter in the city proper, on the wall of the archives building, thus dividing what was otherwise a unitary dossier.⁴⁰ Size was also an option. When Magnesia on the Maeander decided to inscribe the letters sent by those poleis and kings who had accepted its proclamation of the festival of Artemis Leukophryene and granted the city *asylia*, the letters of the kings were inscribed in larger letters than the decrees of most of the poleis, and in a special location.⁴¹

in Telmessos sonst üblichen Sanktionsformel (ἔδοξε Τελμεσσέων τῇ πόλει etc.) unorganisch wirkt; Bertrand 1985: 111.

³⁹ Syll.³ 543 (translation in Bagnall and Derow 2004, no. 32); see Wörrle 1978: 203; Bertrand 1985: 111–12, with discussion of the influence of the king against the civic decision; Mari 2009: 91–2.

⁴⁰ Rigsby 1996: 105. It is unclear which oracle Seleucus had followed: Apollo certainly, but not necessarily the Delphian one: he could have consulted Didyma or Claros (Rigsby 1996: 104). But the vagueness would have suited the Delphians: the default assumption for any reader would have been that the king had followed the oracle of Apollo of Delphi.

⁴¹ See Kern, *I. Magnesia* 1900, p. xxx: 'Die Schrifthöhe ist verschieden, am größten bei den Königsbriefen (im Durchschnitt 0.012) und bei dem gefälschten Kreterdekret, kleiner (etwa 0.01) bei

Until now I have limited myself to describing the possibilities open to a city receiving a royal letter. That the royal language was formally extraneous to that of the polis, although the kings at the same time shared with the polis in the language of euergetism, can, I believe, be accepted; but it remains to show why a royal letter (or any letter, for that matter) should prove disturbing. The theoretical reason for this is grounded in the very concept of epistolarity: for epistolary discourse is marked by the presence of two entities, an 'I' and a 'You', and by the foregrounding of a relationship between them. Sending a letter is moreover always an attempt at pushing the addressee into accepting the relationship in the first place, at eliciting from the recipient a response.⁴² How this worked in practice in the power relationship of the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Greek poleis is shown by an example discussed by John Ma in his seminal analysis of the interactions of empire. In a letter sent to the city of Iasus in c.196 BC, the Seleucid queen Laodice informed the Iasians of her decision to donate to the city a large quantity of wheat. Unsurprisingly, the queen offered in her letter a very positive depiction of herself and of Seleucid power, represented at the time by Antiochus III. What of the image of the Iasians? Laodice states that she has often heard from her brother Antiochus how 'after having recovered your city, as it had fallen into unexpected calamities, he gave back to you your liberty and your laws, and in the other matters he strives to increase the citizen body and bring it to a better condition'. For this reason, Laodice has decided to follow in his footsteps and to donate 1000 Attic medimni of wheat a year for ten years—and to promise other donations, if the behaviour of the Iasians towards her brother and the royal house will conform to expectations, and if they will gratefully remember her donations.⁴³ As pointed out by Ma, in accepting the presents, the Iasians must also accept the royal version of their history, of a city reacquired (and not conquered), of a freedom that depends on the royal benevolence. The queen in her letter had sketched the image of a Iasus such as the Seleucids wanted it to be, and the Iasians not only found it expedient to accept this new version of their history, they also inscribed it on stone; beside it, however, they inscribed a decree presenting a slightly different version of the events, 'rephrasing' the Seleucid viewpoint.⁴⁴ A royal letter, and moreover one offering a donation over ten years, with the promise of further largesse on top, can take some liberties in drawing the image of its interlocutor. And a letter is the perfect diplomatic instrument for such purposes, since a letter is

den übrigen Inschriften'. The approval of the kings carried the acceptance of the festival also by the cities of the kingdoms, hence the privileged position given to their letters. On the dossier from Magnesia see Ceccarelli forthcoming *b*.

⁴² See in general Altman 1982, esp. 117–21. Personae of course are adopted by or attributed to others also in the most banal of face-to-face conversation, but they are not fixed, inscribed on stone for everyone to see. In a decree, the persona of the polis speaks, alone and to no one. But with letters, an individual reaches out, and a polis who writes or accepts letters enters into a relationship with others—something that could not have been easy for the fundamentally autarkic Greek poleis. A further issue, referentiality, is discussed in Ceccarelli forthcoming *a* and *b*.

⁴³ *I. Iasos* 4, see Ma 1999: no. 26A, ll. 25–9: γινόμενοις θ' ὑμῖν εἷς τε τὸν | ἀδελφὸν καὶ καθόλου τὸν οἶκον ἡμῶν οἷους καθήκει | [κα]ὶ τῶν ἀπαντω<μέν>ων εὐεργεσιῶν μεμνημένοις | [εὐ]χαρίστως πειράσσομαι καὶ ἄλλα ἃ ἂν ἐπινοῶ συν- | [παρ]ασκευάζειν.

⁴⁴ Ma 1999: 180–2, 196–8, and 216–17 (217 for the citation). Iasus may in fact never have been under Seleucid control before 201 BC: Ma 1999: 199.

directly addressed by an ‘I’ who can be presented as the author chooses, to a ‘you’, singular or plural, that the letter recognizes as such, to whom it gives a seeming autonomy, a notionally independent existence, but that it also shapes as the author pleases. By answering in a different language, through decrees, the Greek poleis kept in touch with the royal discourse, but avoided being fully drawn into it.

7.2. LETTERS BY GREEK POLEIS

And yet, notwithstanding the existing and accepted distinction between the letter as the means for royal communication at all levels (within the administration, and in dealing with cities) and the civic decree, and notwithstanding the suspicions surrounding the appearance of letters in the official, public sphere, especially when relating to interstate exchanges, quite a few poleis wrote letters. The phenomenon of letters from poleis has not received much scholarly attention; yet it is quite important.

Bertrand, the scholar who has dedicated most attention to the problem of the formal relationship between royal letters and civic decrees, ignores this aspect. He correctly states that ‘Les *grammata* que transmettent les cités à d’autres cités pour demander que soit publié dans leur territoire un document, pour étayer leur position (dans le cas d’un arbitrage) ne sont pas nécessairement des lettres’ (true: in most cases, they seem to have been decrees); but he then goes on to write that ‘Quand le roi Ptolémée dit avoir reçu une lettre des citoyens de Telmessos, c’est par contamination avec sa propre pratique; ce que les ambassadeurs lui ont transmis est sans doute la couronne et le décret qui la décernait, accompagné de considérations annexes’.⁴⁵ In this specific instance, this may—or may not—have been the case; but the list of letters sent by poleis and published on stone given below in appendix 3, as well as references to letters by poleis in other inscriptions or in literary texts, show that some poleis made use of letters for official communications.⁴⁶ From at least c.242 BC, and probably from at least

⁴⁵ Bertrand 1985: 109 n. 53. The king (Ptolemy II) speaks explicitly of a ‘letter’: ἀπέδωκαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἀποσταλέντες | παρ’ ὑμῶν πρεσβευταὶ τὸν στέφα- | νον καὶ τὴν παρ’ ὑμῶν ἐπιστολήν, SEG 28, 1224 ll. 9–11 (cf. Wörle 1978; see above, 308). The decree within which the letter of the king is quoted is dated to 279 BC; this is thus the earliest reference on stone to a letter from a polis. Ma 1999: 179–242 (‘Empire as Interaction’) focuses on the interaction between royal letter and civic discourse, but is not interested in the uses of letters per se.

⁴⁶ Literary texts: e.g. the letter of the magistrates of Laodicea to the proconsul Gaius Rabirius, dated to 47–46 BC, Jos. AJ 14. 241–4. Other inscriptions: the Ptolemaic *strategos* Thraseas, in the letter he sent some time after 238 BC to the city and archons of the Arsinoeis (SEG 39, 1426), stated that he had received a letter from them (l. 2, [Εκ]ρμυσάμεθα τὴν παρ’ ὑμῶν ἐπιστολήν). The reference to γράμματα in the letter of Ptolemy III Euergetes to Xanthos of 243/242 (τὰ τε γράμματα ἀπέδωκαν, ‘and they handed in documents’, SEG 36, 1218, l. 10) need not necessarily imply a letter; similarly for the reference to γράμματα in the regulation from Euromos (SEG 43, 707, ll. 12–15), discussed below, 327. Rubinstein 2013 offers a detailed analysis of the diplomatic conventions of inter-polis relations in the Hellenistic period; she focuses especially on the role of the envoys and on the impact of oral performance, but emphasizes the wide range of possibilities open to each polis.

279 BC, the date when Ptolemy says that he received a letter from the Telmessians (if we accept that Ptolemy meant what he was saying), to the beginning of our era—the moment where I have, somewhat arbitrarily, decided to draw a line—more than forty-five poleis used, at one time or another, the letter form to communicate with other poleis or groups; and many of these letters were considered important enough to be inscribed.⁴⁷ Rome is of course part of the group—it is after all a Hellenistic polis. A very high number of letters was sent by the Romans, and within the same time-frame, a minimum of seventy-one instances of such letters were inscribed in the East; to avoid skewing the data, I have listed the Roman letters separately, at the end of appendix 3.⁴⁸ Without taking into account the letters sent by Rome, we are still left with a total of some seventy-four inscribed letters from Greek poleis or *koina* for the period before our era.

A quick analysis shows that the documents fall into two basic categories: self-sufficient official letters that on their own convey a decision, specific information, or a request; and the so-called ‘covering letters’, sent to accompany a decree. This type is rather frequent (leaving out the excessively fragmentary instances, underlined in appendix 3, thirty-five certain occurrences). Of course, since the covering letters do not accomplish any specific function besides that of accompanying the decree, the polis or the group at the receiving end could decide (unless there was a specific request by the sender, and unless the sender had the power to enforce it) whether to inscribe everything, whether to put everything into their archive, or whether to put the covering letter in the archive and inscribe the decree only. This means that the overall number of covering letters effectively sent might have been far higher than what we in fact have; it still remains the case that we begin to find letters from cities (or mention of letters from cities in epigraphical documents) only from the second quarter of the third century onwards.

A close analysis of the text of these letters shows that the cities have no qualms about drafting letters to convey other documents: the covering letters are felt to be unproblematic.⁴⁹ The situation is different for the ‘self-sufficient letters’, which

⁴⁷ The number is based on the list in appendix 3; but it is here only to give an idea (in some cases the name of the sender is lost; the cities that decided to engrave letters from poleis could for instance also be added to the tally, inasmuch as they would have been familiar with that form of official communication). The practice of course continued, as shown by the letter of recommendation for one of their own citizens sent at the end of the second century AD by the city of Tlos to the prytaneis of nearby Sidyma, *TAM* II 174, ll. 1–31 (cf. *SEG* 50, 1356), or by the letter sent by the ephors and the city of Gythion to the ephors and the city of Pyrrhichion, announcing the death of one of their citizens (*IG* V 1, 1524, of imperial period).

⁴⁸ On Roman official letter writing see the collections of Viereck 1888 and Sherck 1969, as well as Ferrary 2009, Hofmann 2013 and Osborne forthcoming, for the Republican period; Hurlet 2010, for the imperial period. I shall not discuss Roman letters here.

⁴⁹ Thus in the decree honouring Hermias of Stratonicea published in Delphi c.85 BC, the city of Daulis stipulates that they shall send a letter to Stratonicea, appending to it the decree (πέμψαι . . . ποτὶ Στρατονικεῖς . . . [ποτὶ γράψαντας τῇ ἐπιστολῇ τὸ γεγονός | [παρ’ αὐτῶν τίμιον Ἑρμ]ῖα . . . , *Fouilles de Delphes* III 4: 69, ll. 24–5 = Canali De Rossi 2002, no. 141, ll. 24–5; similarly the Delphians in the first century BC decide to inscribe the honours awarded to Artemidoros of Mazaca in the most visible location at Delphi (this is the document we have), and add that ‘a copy of this decree be sent to the city of Mazaca through a letter sealed with the public seal, in which the archons of the city state these honours’ (*Fouilles de Delphes* III 4: 59, ll. 16–19 = Canali De Rossi 2002, no. 142, ll. 16–19: ἀναγραφάψαι δὲ τάσδε τὰς) τευμ[ας ἐν τῷ ἐπιφανεστάτῳ [τό]- | [πρὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, καὶ ἀποστείλαι τὸ ἀντίγραφον τοῦ ψηφίσματος τοῦ]- | [δε πρὸς τ]ῇν πόλιν τῶν Μ[αζακη]νῶν δι’ ἐπι[σ]τολῆ[ς] ὑπὸ [σφραγίδι τῇ δημοσίᾳ], | [ἐγρ]άψαντας τοὺς ἄρχοντα[ς] τῆς πόλεως τάσδε τὰς τιμὰς. Examples could be multiplied (see above n. 46).

present enunciative shifts that betray unease, not to say a difficulty, and that are absent from both contemporary private correspondence and royal correspondence. This second type of official letter from a polis can be further subdivided into letters conveying information, or a request (relatively unproblematic); letters conveying a decision; and documents that seem to offer a mixed format: they are basically decrees, but at their conclusion present the epistolary closing formula 'farewell', *ἔρρωσθε*. It is worth noting that all the examples of this typology are from Cretan cities; in general, Cretan poleis seem to have made a relatively frequent use of the epistolary format in interstate communication.

Let us first look at how covering letters function. A stele from Cos (no. 29 of the list given in appendix 3), preserving a letter and the beginning of a decree of the Eretrians, offers a representative instance of the type of dossier introduced by a covering letter:

[Ἀρίστου(?)] τοῦ Ἀρίστου [τοῦ Δαμ]οκλεῦς Φιλόφρονος τοῦ Παρμενίσκου Τιμάρχου
τοῦ Τιμίδα (three crowns)
Ἐρε[τρίω]ν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ ἡ πόλις Κώϊων τῇ | βου[λῃ] καὶ | τῶι δήμῳ χαίρειν· τῶν
ἐψηφισμέ- | νω[ν] ὑφ' ἡμ]ῶν τιμῶν τῶι τε δήμῳ ὑμῶν καὶ | 5 τοῖ[ς] ἀποσ]ταλείσι
δικασταῖς ἀπεστάλκα- | μεν [ὑμῖν ἀν]τίγραφον σφραγισάμενοι τῇ δημο- | σίαι
[σφραγί]δι ἵνα παρακολουθῇτε. ἔρρωσθε. | *vacat*. |
[ἐπειδὴ πεμ]ψάντων ἡμῶν ψήφισμα καὶ δικ<α>σ- | 10 [ταγωγούς κ]αὶ πρεσβευτὰς πρὸς
τὸν δῆμον τὸν | [Κώϊων Δημή]τριον Εὐκτῆμονος, Λυσίαν Κλεο- | [.]
παρακ]αλέσαντας Κώϊους δοῦναι ἡμῖν | [δικαστὰς ἀν]δρας τρεῖς οἵτινες παραγενόμε-
| [νοι εἰς Ἐρέτρί]αν διεξάξουσιν καλῶς καὶ δι- | 15 [καίως τὰς δίκ]ας καὶ συμφερόντως
[Ἐρετρίεῶ]- | [σιν καὶ τοῖς ἐνοι]κοῦσιν ἐν τ[ῇ] πόλει, ..c.7..] | [.
c.14.] ΤΟΥΤΕ[.c.18. . . .] (IG xii 4, 169)

(Three crowns, and above each, the name of each honorand)

[Aristos?] son of Aristos of Damokleus; Philophron son of Parmeniskos; Timarchos son of Timidas.

The archons and the city [of the Eretrians] to the [council and] the people of the Coans, greetings. We have sent to you a copy of the honours voted by us to your people and to the judges you sent, authenticating it with the public seal, so that you may know. Farewell. *Vacat*

Whereas having sent a decree and *dikastagogoi* and ambassadors to the people of the Coans, Demetrius the son of Euctemon, Lysias the son of Cleo- [-], to [call] on the Coans to provide for us [as judges] three men who on their arrival to Eretria would settle well and justly the lawsuits and in the interest of the Eretrians and those living in the city, the . . .

Here we find, after the three crowns highlighting the names of the honorands, a letter presenting, after the usual epistolary prescript, the expected shift to first person of the sender and second of the addressee, plural in both cases since the magistrates and city of Eretria are collectively addressing the council and people of Cos; these deictic personae are maintained until the end of the letter. The decree then follows. Uncommonly, it begins directly with the motivation clause: there are no dating elements. Even though the prescript is omitted, the text as a whole flows smoothly: because of the preceding letter, the actors are already known; but interestingly (and logically, since the motivation follows directly from a letter) the motivation clause refers to the Eretrians with first person pronouns (*ἡμῶν* and *ἡμῖν*, lines 9 and 12). This is usually not the case in Athenian decrees: the

motivation clause is throughout in the third person. And (more pertinent to the case at hand, since this is a letter from Eretria), this is not the case in Eretrian decrees: the honorands are said to have typically shown their goodwill to the polis and the demos, not to 'us'.⁵⁰ Of course, whoever had spoken in the assembly to promote the honorands' cause would have talked of 'our city'; but at the moment of the redaction of the decree, the deictic pronouns would be eliminated. Here, possibly because of the 'letter effect', two first person plural deictics have re-entered the motivation (the decree would have had 'the polis', or the Eretrians, as we indeed find later in the text, lines 14–16). After this part, there would probably have been a hortative formula, and then the decree would have moved towards the resolution. This part is lost, but in it we would probably have found a third person of the body decreeing (the Eretrians) and a third person of the addressee of the decree. Three elements in this documentary dossier are, however, surprising: the first one, already mentioned, is the omission of the prescript with the usual dating elements at the beginning of the decree. This may have been already so in the text the Eretrians sent the Coans, or it may reflect a decision by the Coans, by the stone-cutter, or by some magistrate.⁵¹ One can only advance guesses as to the reason why. The second is the presence of the first person plural pronouns in the motivation clause, which may depend on the presence and influence of the covering letter. As for the third surprising element, it may explain why the covering letter was inscribed. Crowther noticed, in his discussion of the text, an anomaly: the letter mentions the award of honours to the people and the judges; but the three crowns each bear the name of an individual judge, so that there is no place for a separate crown acknowledging the honours to the demos in the heading of the stela.⁵² At this point one may suspect that the Coans decided to engrave the letter, because it mentioned the honours for their own demos, absent from the text of the decree.⁵³

Another instance in which a covering letter adds information is the letter sent by the archons of Elatea to Delphi, to accompany a manumission (no. 32 in appendix 3). The important document is of course the manumission (ll. 8–28); but the covering letter contains the request to the Delphians to inscribe the other document, and the information that the manumission had also been inscribed on the sanctuary of Asklepios at Elatea. The archons of Elatea thus sent two official

⁵⁰ One Athenian instance of the early Hellenistic period, *IG ii², 495, 303–302 BC*: ἐπειδὴ Ἀλκαῖος Ἑραί- | [ο]ν Αἰνῖος διατρίβων παρὰ τῷ βασιλ- | [ε]ῖ Δημητρίῳ διατελεῖ πράττων ἀγα- | [θ]ὸν ὅτι δύναται καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ[ι] | [π]ερὶ τε τοὺς ἀφικνουμένους ἰδῆαι [Δ]- | 15 [θη]ναίων πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα καὶ κοι[v]- | [η]ι περὶ τὸν δῆμον τὸν Ἀθηναίων. One Eretrian instance, of approximately the same date as the letter, *IG xii 9, 222*: Νικίῳν Χοιρήθεν Κίκου εἰπε[ε]- | ἐπειδὴ Φιλόξενος ἀνὴρ ἀγα- | θός ἐστιν περὶ τὴν πόλιν τῇ[v] | Ἑρετ[ρ]ίων, ἔδοξεν τεῖ βουλῇ | 5 καὶ τοῖς δήμοις κτλ.

⁵¹ The same omission is visible in another honorific decree for Coan judges, found in Cos but emanating from Chalcis: Crowther 1999: 284–93, no. 8 (*IG xii 4, 168*). Possibly in the papyrus version that arrived in Cos this one too had been provided with an accompanying letter. But note Savalli 2010: 129 on the fact that inscribed documents do not always and systematically bear an indication of the date.

⁵² Crowther 1999: 299. Note that in the decree sent by Chalcis mentioned in the note above, the decree's heading has three crowns, but only two judges were honoured: the third crown was left for the demos of the Coans (and no covering letter was inscribed).

⁵³ There may of course have been a separate decree honouring the demos. Note that from the preserved motivation clause of the decree it appears that the affair was initiated in the standard way, through sending a decree and ambassadors.

documents, a manumission and an official request, couched in the form of a letter, to have the latter inscribed; their request also contained information as to the publication of the manumission in Elatea itself. The Delphians might still have chosen to inscribe the manumission only. They did not, and we get a glimpse of a type of letter that must have been relatively frequent, containing not a decision, but a (polite) request, often phrased, as here, with variations on the formula ‘you will do well’, εὖ οὖν ποιήσετε. Within the list in appendix 3, a similar request for inscription is also made in the covering letter accompanying the decree with which the Cnossians had voted honours to Magnesia on the Maeander (*I. Magnesia* 67, no. 8 in appendix 3).

This example is very close to those self-sufficient official letters that, on their own, without referring to other documents, convey information or a request. Their number is relatively limited (I count eight, leaving out the cases in which the fragmentary status of the stone makes it impossible to decide: nos. 9, 10, 16, 37, 38, 43, 62, and 63 in appendix 3)—but then, there might not have been strong reasons for inscribing them. The two letters sent by the *kosmoi* and the polis of Gortyna and Hierapytna to the *kosmoi* and polis of Itanos, to warn the latter of the movements of the Praisians (nos. 37 and 38), are actually only mentioned as archival documents, retrieved (and then inscribed) in the context of a later arbitration between Hierapytna and Itanos. The other instances comprise the request sent by the Kytienians to help them reconstruct the walls of their city (no. 10, where the request is expressed through a form of ἀξιιάζω = ἀξιόω, ‘think right, expect, resolve’); the letter sent by the Cretan city of Axos (no. 16), informing the Aetolians of the situation of their citizen Epikles, and requesting that any harm to him and his family may be prevented at both the public and the private level (a request expressed with καλῶς ὦν ποιησεῖτε φροντίδ- | δοντες ὅπαι..., ‘you will do well in taking care that’); finally, notwithstanding its fragmentary status, the letter sent by Tyre to Delphi with information on some event (no. 43) may also be counted this group, as well as the exchange between the Gephyraioi and Delphi (nos. 62–3).

More interesting are the letters that express a decision (some eighteen documents, nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 24, 26, 36, 45, and 70–4; in a few instance, the fragmentary status does not allow precise examination of their wording, but the overall context makes the meaning plain). One instance will do here, the letter sent by the polis of Polyrrhenia to Teos for the *asylia* in 201 BC (no. 12):

Πολυρρηνίων | Πολυρρηνίων οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Τηίων τῶι δάμωι | καὶ τῶι βωλαῖ
χαίρειν· κομισάμενοι τὸ ψάφισμα τὸ παρ’ ὑμῶν ἀνέγνωμεν καὶ τῶν πρεσβευτῶν
Ἀπολλοδό- | 5 τω{ι} καὶ Κωλώτα{ι} διακούσαμεν παρακαλούντων μετὰ | πάνσας
σπουδὰς καὶ φιλοτιμίας ἀκολούθως τοῖς ἐν τῶι | ψαφίσματι κατακεχωρισμένοις· περὶ
δὴ τούτων δεδό- | χθαι Πολυρρηνίων τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ τῶι πόλει ἀποκρίνασ- | θαι
Τηίοις διότι τὸν Διόνυσον καὶ αὐτοὶ σεβόμεθα καὶ δίδο- | 10 ται τῶι θεῶι [παρ’ αἰ]μῶν
τάν τε πόλιν καὶ τὰν χώραν ἀνιέμεν | ἱερὰν καὶ ἄσυλον νῦν τε καὶ εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον·
ἡμεν δὲ | καὶ [πάνσι τ]οῖς ἐν Τέῳ ἀσφάλειαν καὶ κατὰ γὰρ καὶ κατὰ | [θάλασσαν] ἐ[ς] τὸν
ἅπαντα χρόνον· ἔρρωσθε. (IC 2 xxiii 3)

Of the Polyrrhenians. The *kosmoi* and the city of the Polyrrhenians to the people and the council of the Teans, greetings. Having received your decree we read it and we heard the ambassadors Apollodotus and Kolotas who invited us with great eagerness and zeal in conformity with what was detailed in the decree; concerning these matters,

let it seem good to the *kosmoi* and the city of the Polyrrenians to answer to the Teans that we do ourselves respect Dionysos and that recognition of the city and the country as sacred and inviolable, now and for all time, is granted to the god from us; and may all Teans be safe both on land and sea for all time. Farewell.

The letter begins with an epistolary prescript in the third person of sender and addressee. This is followed by the expected enunciative shift to the first person plural for the sender, and to the second person plural for the addressees (the citizens of Teos). But with the resolution formula (*δεδόχθαι*) a further shift intervenes: for a moment, when relating the decision, the Polyrrenians refer to themselves in the third person; more importantly, they now answer the Teans, referring to them in the third person, instead of the second-person 'you' as before. The Polyrrenians go immediately back to a 'we', but maintain a perspective in which they speak of the Teans in the third person. It is only in the final greeting, *ἔρρωσθε*, that the second person plural, referring to the addressees, the Teans, reappears. What appeared as two distinct moments in the ensemble formed by covering letter and joined decree is here brought under one heading.

The same happens, less visibly, in a small group of five documents from Crete (nos. 70–4) that are from all points of view decrees with an appended greeting, *ἔρρωσθε*; for here, until the end, readers have no way of knowing that what they have in front of them is actually a letter; only retrospectively can the text be construed as such.

The use of a resolution formula with *δεδόχθαι* in these letter-decrees is worth stressing: this is exactly what the royal chanceries had tried to avoid. In general, letters from cities presents formulations that are relatively close to the language of the decrees.⁵⁴ Out of the eighteen letters that convey a decision (the only relevant here), three (nos. 5, 11, and 14) are too fragmentary to be of use; seven (nos. 1, 4, 6, 12, 24, 26, and 36) use a form of *δοκέω* (mostly *δεδόχθαι*) for the resolution; to these seven must be added the five Cretan documents (nos. 70–4) that appear as decrees with a greeting at the end, and which also use forms of *δοκέω* for the resolution. Thus, only three official letters that also express a decision, the letter sent by the Cretan cities of Phaistos and Kydonia to Cos and Teos respectively (nos. 2 and 13) and the one sent by Delphi to Athens (no. 45) deviate from this pattern. The letter from Phaistos has simply a string of infinitives; the letter from Kydonia too omits the resolution formula altogether, and moves directly to the decision itself; in the third letter, *ἐκρίναμεν* is used to express the decision, but the Delphians are here simply summarizing and confirming an earlier decision for the benefit of the Athenians.

The pattern of use with respect to the motivation formula is only slightly different. Out of the eighteen letters conveying a decision, three letters (nos. 5, 6, and 13), to which must be added the five Cretan letter-decrees (70–4), introduce the motivation of the decision with *ἐπειδή* (moreover Phaistos, no. 2, has *ἐπεὶ*); interestingly, Kydonia, which had avoided a form of *δοκέω*, uses *ἐπειδή*. As for

⁵⁴ Moreover, in the letters nos. 1 and 2, the document itself is referred to as *ψήφισμα* (*ψάφισμα*) (e.g. when stipulating the inscription on stone), and similarly in no. 11 as *τὸ γραφὲν δόγμα*. Conversely, the prytaneis of the Milesians (no. 39) name the covering letter they are sending (which gives actually quite a few details) an *ἐπιστολή*.

those self-standing official letters that introduced a request or transmitted information, the forms used to ask for the favour (or to give a warning) are variations on *εὖ οὖν ποιήσετε* ('you will do well'); the reason for the request may sometimes be given through the use of *ἐπειδή*, but genitive absolutes or independent statements are also often used. The letters from the cities thus behave on the whole more freely than the royal letters: they may make use of the polite language employed in the royal letters (*καλῶς* or *εὖ οὖν ποιήσετε* is a typical way for a king to give an order), but they often rely on the language of the decrees.

In order to appreciate the importance of the use of letters within ancient diplomacy and to evaluate its place in the context of the administrative practices of the Greek poleis, it remains to determine which poleis sent letters, on what occasions, and why. The discussion that follows will rely on the collection, documented in appendix 3, of all letters by Greek poleis or groups preserved on stone. This material will occasionally be integrated with instances of official letters attested in the literary tradition; but, as already stated, it is the very fact of their inscription on stone which makes these letters particularly significant, because it put them on display, marking their significance for the collectivity. As a result, equal attention will be given in analysing this material to the sender of the official letter and to the locality where the text was engraved: for the place where it was decided to inscribe the letter and the polis or the group responsible for its inscription are as important and significant as the sender. A specific location had to be designated for the erection of the stele, money had to be paid, and publicity would result: some thought would have to be given to what exactly to post and where.⁵⁵ If letter writing for official reasons was part of the administrative practice of the recipient (polis or group, this is not important), this might have made the inscription of a letter (and even just a covering letter) more likely. There must have been a significant volume of official epistolary exchanges, both between a polis and *strategoi* or ambassadors on a mission, and between poleis; but in the majority of cases these letters will have been destroyed after the message had been conveyed, or will have been kept in an archive (and in this case they may then resurface in the literary tradition, or in later documentary dossiers). Only in very rare instances would these epistolary exchanges have been deemed worth recording on stone, and it is worth seeing why.⁵⁶

Let us begin with the geographical distribution of the inscribed non-royal official letters.

7.2.1. The Cretan Poleis

A first, relatively consistent group is formed by the Cretan poleis: altogether, fifteen letters (nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 24, 26, and 37–8), sent by twelve cities, Istron, Phaistos, Lappa, Cnossus, Gortyna, Sybrita, Polyrrhenia, Kydonia, Hierapytna, Axos, Allaria, and Aptera, to Tenos, to Cos (four letters), to Teos for the request of *asylia* (five letters), to the Aetolians, to Magnesia on the

⁵⁵ Liddel 2003; Ma 2009.

⁵⁶ See above, 298, for the importance of paying attention to the epigraphic habits of the various poleis.

Maeander, to Paros, and to Itanos in Crete (two letters). If we count also the five 'mixed' cases from Crete (from Axos, Arcades, Hyrtacina, and Priansos, all sent to Teos in answer to its request of *asylia*, two in 201 BC, three in 170 BC), the Cretan group begins to have a remarkable weight (twenty instances altogether, out of which only one is a covering letter, accompanying a decree; if Aptera sent a letter rather than a decree to Teos in 201 BC, the total rises to twenty-one). The 'mixed cases' are definitely more meaningful than a simple covering letter, even if they present only an epistolary greeting and do not have an epistolary prescript, since they imply an interpenetration of letter and decree. Finally, we may want to consider whether the letter sent by the polemarchs and the *synhedroi* of the Thebans to the *kosmoi* and the polis of Polyrrhenia (no. 15) should fall within this group, since the decision to have the letter inscribed may be counted as an instance of the epigraphic habit typical of the latter city.

However, there are some problems: not only did almost all of these poleis also send decrees to other poleis; in most cases the writing of decrees is attested within a close chronological range, so that it is impossible to postulate an evolution or a constitutional change.⁵⁷ A closer scrutiny shows that of the twenty instances, ten concern the Tean request for *asylia*: five are 'real' letters and five others take the form I defined as 'mixed' (among these, three concern a later request for renewal). It may seem reasonable to suppose that in this specific case either the request of the Teans, as presented by the group of *theoroi* that visited the cities in question, or the format in which one of the first Cretan cities visited by the Tean *theoroi* answered, shaped the format in which other Cretan cities answered.⁵⁸ It should be added that the first Tean request had been endorsed by both Philip V of Macedon and Antiochus III: ambassadors from both accompanied the *theoroi*, and the desire to please the ambassadors and through them the kings is at times mentioned in the answers of the Cretan cities. This at any rate means that around 200 BC the Cretan cities did not have strong views on the formal shape they wanted to give their documents (a hypothesis actually supported by the variations in the order and formulations of the decrees), and in particular, that they did not have problems with letters.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Lappa, for instance, sends in the second half of the third century BC a letter to the Tenians (no. 4, IC 2 xvi 2); but in 201 BC the same polis sends to Teos, in answer to the Teans' request of *asylia*, what seems to be a decree, IC 2 xvi 3 (both documents are however fragmentary). Allaria at the beginning of the second century BC writes to the Parians a letter (no. 24, IC 2 i 2 B); but a decree had been sent to Teos in 201 (IC 2 i 1).

⁵⁸ A textbook case of *Empfängerformular*, although I think it was rather an answer that shaped most other answers (and, for the renewal of the *asylia* in 170 BC, the earlier answer may have provided the basis: for instance, Aptera might have sent a letter to Teos already in 201 BC, and another letter in 170 BC, cf. appendix 3, no. 26); otherwise, there would be no Cretan decrees for the request of *asylia* at all, and especially not by poleis who otherwise also could send letters (see n. 57 above). On the bureaucratic workings of the *Empfängerformular* see Chaniotis 1999, who stresses that requests of *asylia* are one of the elements that led to a unification and standardization of the various cities' formularies (he takes the example of Magnesia, on which see now Ceccarelli forthcoming b, with bibliography): in such situations, the same group of *theoroi* embarks on a tour, presenting to a number of cities, one after the other, the same documents, and showing the answers received. Each time the city addressed would use as a basis the last answer given, or at any rate model its answer on the text of the request, using it as a primer.

⁵⁹ To give an idea of the proportion: in 201 BC, seventeen Cretan cities answered the request of *asylia*; six answered with letters; a seventh, Aptera, may have used a letter (cf. discussion at appendix 3,

What of the remaining instances? The decision of the Polyrrhenians, to inscribe the covering letter that the polemarchs and *synhedroi* of the Thebans had sent them, is not surprising; the Polyrrhenians, who had themselves sent a letter to Teos in answer to the request of *asylia*, had no problems with this type of format, and inscribed it along with the decree. The other instances of letters from Cretan cities show that the use of the epistolary format in Crete (or at any rate in some of the Cretan cities) is to be explained by more than simply the occasional use of someone else's formulation (*Empfängerformular*). Two documents are letter-decrees by Cnossus and Gortyna for the same Coan doctor, Hermias son of Emmenidas, who had distinguished himself for his services in a war in which both cities participated on the same side; both texts were inscribed in Cos, in c.219 BC (nos. 5 and 6 = IG xii 4, 1 247 and 248). As these were honorific decrees, their inscription would gratify the city that had given birth to the honorand, so the fact that Cos monumentalized these letters is not particularly surprising; and as the services for which Hermias was honoured were rendered to both cities on the same occasion, we could suppose that one city followed the lead of the other. A third decree for Hermias is preserved, by the city of Halicarnassus, dated to the end of the third century and also inscribed in Cos: it praises Hermias for having taken care of citizens of Halicarnassus in Cos, and is shaped like a formal decree (both the decree of the Halicarnassians, and that of the Coans accepting the honours voted by the Halicarnassians, were inscribed on the same stele).⁶⁰ Thus, it was not because of any influence of Hermias that Cretan cities produced letters rather than decrees—otherwise, Halicarnassus too might have written a letter.

Of the remaining documents, one is a very fragmentary text from Lappa (no. 4), sent to Tenos in answer to the Tenian request for *asylia*. The beginning is lost, but there is an epistolary greeting at the end of the letter. The Tenians had grouped the answers geographically, but the other four Cretan texts are all so badly preserved that it is impossible to be sure of their format; it is thus impossible to know whether Lappa's reaction of sending a letter to the Tenians was unique, or shared with other Cretan poleis.⁶¹ Then, there is a letter (the beginning is lost) of Cnossus to Magnesia on the Maeander, accompanying an honorific decree for two citizens of the latter (no. 8), dated to c.208 BC; the important item was here the decree, and unfortunately its end is lost; but in the letter the Cnossians mentioned that they had themselves inscribed the decree in the temple of Apollo Delphidios, and this may well have been the reason that pushed the Magnesians to inscribe the letter as well.⁶² Also unrelated to any request for *asylia* is the letter sent around c.200–170 BC by the city of Axos in Crete to the Aetolians, and inscribed in Delphi, together with a corresponding decree of the Aetolians (no. 16). The use of the letter format here can be explained by the fact that Axos was not communicating to the Aetolians a

no. 26 = Rigsby 1996, no. 145; for the request of renewal, around 170 BC, Aptera will send a letter); ten cities, Apollonia, Biannos, Cnossus, Istron, Lato, Lato pros Komara, Rhaukos, Allaria, Eleutherna, and Lappa, sent decrees.

⁶⁰ I. Cos, ED 132 = Samama 2003, no. 128 = IG xii 4 142.

⁶¹ See Rigsby 1996: 159–162, nos. 56–60; the text from Lappa is his no. 59 (= IC 2 xvi 2). Note also the separately presented decree found in Phaestus, and referring to the same request, Rigsby 1996, no. 55, also extremely fragmentary.

⁶² Behind such decisions were, of course, also the interests of individual honorands.

decision: the family of a citizen of Axos had, after long vicissitudes detailed in the stele, established itself in Aetolia, and the Axians are simply stating (probably following a request of the interested party, Epikles) that Epikles and his family are citizens of Axos, and thus should be covered by the existing agreements. It is up to the Aetolians to take a decision, and this they do in the decree that follows on the stone. Here one sees why both documents would have been needed, but one also sees why Axos sent a letter, rather than a decree: there were no grounds for one. The last two letters from Crete are part of a long and complex dossier, the arbitration conducted by Magnesia between Itanos and Hierapytna (nos. 37 and 38); the letters, sent by the *kosmoi* and polis of Gortyna and Hierapytna to the *kosmoi* and polis of Itanos, were written around 145 BC and evidently kept in an archive; the dossier was inscribed later, in 112/111 BC, and in this context, the letters were cited as proofs.⁶³

7.2.2. Sparta

A second smaller, but still consistent cluster concerns Sparta. Against the rather low number of official inscribed documents found in Sparta (and this is taking into account both the decrees issued by Spartans and those issued by other poleis and then inscribed in Sparta), the proportion of official letters appears all in all rather high.⁶⁴ Four, or possibly five, letters of Greek poleis addressed to Sparta have survived. Of these, only one was almost certainly a decree in form of a letter (no. 50 on the list); unfortunately, it is so fragmentary that it is impossible to identify its origin, but what remains makes it clear that it was not just a matter of conveying another piece of writing. The other letters seem to have been covering letters, sent by the prytanis and demos of the Bylliones in Illyria, by the *grammateus* of a Macedonian or Achaean polis, by an unidentified polis, and by either the secretary of a polis or a king or a magistrate (respectively nos. 23, 44, 59, and 69 in the list given in appendix 3). The frequent inscription of covering letters over a relatively ample span of time (from the beginning of the second century to the end of the first) cannot be brought back to the policy of one (or a very small) group of

⁶³ See Ager 1996: 431–46, no. 158, for discussion of this case. References to letters appear in other instances of arbitration: beside no. 39 on my list, a sealed letter by one Hippocrates of Oloosson is mentioned (but the addressees are lost) in the dispute between Herakleion and Gonnoi, around 220–200 BC: *I. Gonnoi*, no. 93, ll. 23–7. Hippocrates' status and role in the affair are not known: the traditional hypothesis saw in him one of the *epistatai* in charge of regulating the conflict; but according to Hatzopoulos, he might have been a member of the royal administration, or else an arbiter designated ad hoc (see Magnetto 1997: 305, who concludes that he was an epistates who would have collected, written down in a letter, and sealed the testimony of those witnesses who could not be personally present at the debate; see also Ager 1996: 147–50). The dossier comprised also a letter sent to Gonnoi by Petraios, an official of Philip V, conveying to both cities the king's decision.

⁶⁴ Boring 1979: 6–7 states that out of twenty-seven decrees voted by other poleis and found in Sparta nine are epistolary, dated to the period from the end of the third century BC to the end of the second century BC; to these documents he adds the fragment of a treaty of the third century BC. As for Spartan official documents, they comprise a fragment of a treaty with the Aetolians Erxadieis, dated to the end of the fifth century; two lists of contributions for the Peloponnesian war; six honorary decrees, of the third or second century BC; a financial document possibly to be dated to the first century BC; and the regulations of the Leonidaea, first century BC. But there are no references, and it is not clear to me how he counted his documents.

individuals. To these documents, we may add three instances of official letters sent by Spartan magistrates to other poleis (no. 28, 49, and 64 in the list). The first is a letter of the *grammatophylax* (secretary) of Sparta to Amphissa, dating to the mid-second century BC, accompanying a decree. The second is a letter sent by the Spartan ephors and polis to the *tagoi* (chief magistrates) and the people of Larisa, also to be dated to the second century BC, and found in Larisa. This is not a letter of the *grammateus*, but a letter sent by the authorities: it may have functioned as a covering letter for a decree appended below (*presbeis* are mentioned), but it might also have been a self-standing document; regrettably, the text breaks off after four lines. The third one is a later document, a letter of the ephors and polis of Sparta to the Delphians accompanying a decree concerning honours for Diodorus, and part of a larger dossier dated to the years 30–25 BC.

The relatively high number of letters connected with Sparta ties in well with what can be gathered from the literary sources: in a world that still made slight use of writing for long-distance communication, Herodotus and Thucydides had reported a fairly large number of letters from Spartans; the same trend had been apparent in Xenophon. We may set aside the problem of whether or not these letters are authentic: what matters for our purposes is that for Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon exchanging letters was part of normal Spartan practice, and that an unknown comic poet of the *archaia* could happily compare the size of what must have been a very small field to that of a Laconian letter.⁶⁵

The *σκυτάλη*, the wooden stick carried by official Spartan messengers and used to transmit orders or (later) secret messages, is also part of the picture: whatever the details of its functioning, it is clear that it served to transmit written orders.⁶⁶ Similarly, the importance of the (written?) transmission of messages is evident from the title of *ἐπιστολεύς*, attested in Xenophon five times for the second-in-command of the fleet (Xen. *Hell.* 1. 1. 23; 2. 1. 7; 4. 8. 11; 5. 1. 5; 5. 1. 6, and note Plut. *Lys.* 7. 3). It is true that Pollux (1. 96) explains the title with *ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ στόλου διάδοχος τοῦ ναύαρχου*, ‘the successor of the navarch as head of the expedition’; but the equivalence with *ἐπιστολιαφόρος* in Xen. *Hell.* 6. 2. 25 makes it evident that at least some Greeks heard *ἐπιστολή* in the title, and understood it as stressing the close contact to be kept—via letters?—with the Spartan authorities.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon: see above, ch. 4. Comic comparison: see Comica adespota, fr. fr. 456 K.–A.: *Ἀγρόν ἔσχε' ἐλάττω γῆν ἔχοντ' ἐπιστολῆς | Λακωνικῆς*. Harris 1989: 112–14 is sceptical about the level of literacy in Sparta; but see Cartledge 1978; Richer 1998: 489–90 and 519–20; Millender 2001 (on letter writing, esp. 141–2). Overview on uses of writing at Sparta, Thomas 1992: 136–7.

⁶⁶ See Pritchett 1974: 45–6 (slightly outdated); Boring 1979: 39–41; Lewis 1996: 143–4 and n. 91; for the problem posed by the extended (but anachronistic) description of the functioning of the *skytale* in Plut. *Lys.* 19. 7–12 see Piccirilli 1997: 267 with further bibliography; detailed discussion of the *skytale* and more generally of the modalities of communication in Sparta in Richer 1998: 482–90, following on the main points in Kelly 1985. *Skytale* and letter are put on the same level in schol. Pind. *Ol.* 6. 190–1: *ἐχρῶντο δὲ πλατεῖαις σκυτάλαις οἱ Λάκωνες, ἐγγράφοντες αὐταῖς τὰς ἐπιστολάς*.

⁶⁷ See Pritchett 1974: 45–6. Later, the secretaries of Hellenistic kings will bear the title of *ἐπιστολαγράφος* (the form present in Polybius): cf. the dedications from Delos honouring Menochares, *τῶν πρώτων φίλων* and *ἐπιστολαγράφος* of Demetrius I of Syria (162–150 BC); honouring Bithys, *syngenes* and *ἐπιστολαγράφος* of Antiochus VIII Epiphanes Grypos (125–113 BC); and honouring Stolos of Athens, officer of Ptolemy X Soter II (116–81 BC), *syngenes* of the king, *ἀρχεθέατρον καὶ ναύαρχον καὶ ἐπιστολογράφον, τεταγμένον δὲ καὶ πρὸς ταῖς ἡνείκας*, I. *Délos* 1543, 1549, and 1534, with

Moreover, the later literary tradition offers further instances of letters sent by Sparta. The epistolary dossier quoted in the first book of the Maccabees is a well-known example. The first letter was supposedly sent by the high priest Jonathan to the 'Spartan brothers'; to it is joined an earlier letter, sent by King Areus (309–264) to the high priest Onias; a third letter of the Spartiatas closes the dossier, addressed, after Jonathan's death, to his brother Simon; this one would have been engraved on a bronze tablet.⁶⁸ These letters are also mentioned by Josephus, who gives a slightly different prescript, more complex and detailed, closer to the standard epistolary one, while at the same time preserving the appellation 'brothers': ἀρχιερεὺς Ἰωνάθης τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ ἡ γερουσία καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῶν ἱερέων Λακεδαιμονίων ἐφόροις καὶ γερουσίᾳ καὶ δήμῳ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν, 'Jonathan, high priest of the Jewish nation and the elders and the council of priests to their brothers the ephors, the elders, and the people of the Lacedaemonians, greetings'.⁶⁹ And the collection of letters attributed to Apollonius of Tyana comprises both a letter sent by the Spartans to Apollonius (a covering letter for the decree it accompanies) and the latter's answer.⁷⁰ The fiction is evident; but here as in the case of the correspondence between the high priests and the Spartan kings, what is interesting is the choice of Sparta for this kind of fiction. Similarly, the exchange between Aristocrates, the Arcadian king who betrayed Aristomenes, and the Spartan king Anaxandros, at the time of the Second Messenian war, is clearly an instance of 'invention of tradition' that may have its origin in the rewriting of Messenian history in the years following the liberation of Messenia (from the mid-fourth century onwards); here the letters, instruments of betrayal, are exchanged between the two villains, the Spartan king and the Arcadian one.⁷¹

The Spartans' laconic style seems to have become one of the models of epistolary style: Plutarch remembers a number of letters by Spartans, some concerning public and official communications, others exchanges that may be better defined as 'private' or personal.⁷² This Spartan epistolary tradition, as

Virgilio 2011: 62–9. Note also the very fragmentary *I. Délos* 1535, and *SEG* 26, 1123 (Callisthenes *epistolographos* of Alexander).

⁶⁸ Respectively, 1 Macc. 12: 6–18 (letter of Jonathan): Ἰωνᾶθαν ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ ἡ γερουσία τοῦ ἔθνους καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ λοιπὸς δῆμος τῶν Ἰουδαίων Σπαρτιάταις τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν. ἔτι πρότερον ἀπεστάλησαν ἐπιστολαὶ πρὸς Ὀνίαν τὸν ἀρχιερέα παρὰ Ἀρείου τοῦ βασιλεύοντος ἐν ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐστὲ ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν, ὡς τὸ ἀντίγραφον ὑπόκειται . . . ; 12: 19–23 (annex letter of Areus): Ἄρῃς βασιλεὺς Σπαρτιατῶν Ὀνίᾳ ἱερεὶ μεγάλῃ χαίρειν. εὐρήθη ἐν γραφῇ περὶ τε τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν καὶ Ἰουδαίων ὅτι εἰσὶν ἀδελφοὶ . . . ; and 14: 16–23 (letter of the Spartans to Simon): Σπαρτιατῶν ἄρχοντες καὶ ἡ πόλις Σίμωνι ἱερεὶ μεγάλῃ καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ τοῖς ἱερεῦσι καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ δήμῳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν . . .

⁶⁹ Fl. Jos. *Ant.* 12. 166–70; and *Ant.* 12. 225–8 (letter of Areus to Onias, beginning: Βασιλεὺς Λακεδαιμονίων Ἄρειος Ὀνίᾳ χαίρειν. ἐντυχόντες γραφῇ τινι εὖρομεν ὡς ἐξ ἐνὸς εἶεν γένους Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι).

⁷⁰ Apoll. Tyan., *Epp.* 62. 1–2: Λακεδαιμόνιοι Ἀπολλωνίᾳ Τᾶν δεδομενᾶν τιμᾶν σοι ἀπεστάλκαμεν τόδε ἀντίγραφον σφραγίσμενοι τῇ δημοσίᾳ σφραγίδι, ἵνα εἴδῃς. Ψήφισμα Λακεδαιμονίων, καθὼς οἱ γέροντες . . . ('The Lacedaemonians to Apollonius: We have sent this copy of the honours we are giving you, sealing it with the public seal, for your information'), and 63: Ἀπολλώνιος ἐφόροις καὶ Λακεδαιμονίοις . . . ('Apollonius to the ephors and the Lacedaemonians . . .'); no closing greetings (I follow here the Loeb text and translation of Jones 2006).

⁷¹ According to Pausanias (4. 22. 5–6), the letter was carried by a slave, who was intercepted as he was coming back. See Musti and Torelli 1991: 234.

⁷² Discussion in Celentano 1991.

preserved in Plutarch, is construed as going back to Lycurgus: two of his apophthegms were reputedly handed down in writing:

There are also handed down similar answers which he made by letter to his fellow-citizens (φέρονται δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀποκρίσεις τοιαῦται πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας). When they asked how they could ward off an invasion of enemies, he answered: 'By remaining poor, and by not desiring to be greater than the other.' And when they asked about fortifying their city, he answered: 'A city will be well fortified which is surrounded by brave men and not by bricks.' (Plut. *Lyc.* 19. 4, trans. Perrin)

At least the second one is a topos that had been circulating since the time of Alcaeus; and as Plutarch himself wisely remarks, *περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἐπιστολῶν οὔτε ἀπιστῆσαι ῥάδιον οὔτε πιστεῦσαι*, 'regarding these and similar letters, neither scepticism nor belief are easy' (note that in *Apophth. Lac.* 228 D, nos. 27 and 28, Lycurgus gives the same answers orally). A number of other Spartan kings and generals have among the stories attached to their lives some anecdote connected to writing. The famous story of Demaratus' tablet and the messages that according to Thucydides were circulating at the time of the Ionian war have been discussed above; but an epistolary exchange is mentioned also in connection with Brasidas: the text (*Ἐξελθὼν δ' ἐπὶ πόλεμον ἔγραψε τοῖς ἐφόροις ἄσσα δηλοῦμαι πράξω κατὰ πόλεμον ἢ τεθναεῖν*), 'When going to war he wrote to the ephors: "What I want to do I'll do, concerning the war, or I'll die"', Plut. *Apophth. Lac.* 219 D, no. 3) is extraordinarily banal, and this makes one suppose that the dictum was made up because it was felt that Brasidas too should have some kind of anecdote, and if possible in writing, attached to his name.

Lysander is also at the centre of quite a few exchanges: Plutarch reports the common tradition concerning his message to the ephors at the moment of Athens' surrender, together with the reaction of the ephors (famously, Lysander wrote 'Athens is taken', to which the ephors objected that 'taken' would have been enough; if Plutarch is to be trusted, the Lacedaemonians themselves were behind the diffusion of this sort of anecdote).⁷³ The theme of the deceptive letter that brings death, which had played such an important role in the story of the regent Pausanias, is given a new twist in the story of the dissent opposing Lysander and Pharnabazus: as a result of Lysander's excesses, Pharnabazus sent men to Sparta, denouncing him, and when the ephors found that men of Lysander's entourage had money in their possession, they sent a *skytale* to recall Lysander to Sparta (Plut. *Lys.* 19.4);

But Lysander, when the *skytale* reached him at the Hellespont, was much disturbed, and since he feared the denunciations of Pharnabazus above all others, he hastened to hold a conference with him, hoping to compose their quarrel. At this conference he begged Pharnabazus to write another letter about him to the magistrates (*ἐδεῖτο γράψαι περὶ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἑτέραν ἐπιστολήν*), stating that he had not been wronged at all, and had no complaints to make. But in thus 'playing the Cretan

⁷³ Plut. *Lys.* 14. 4: *καίτοι Λακεδαιμονίων ἐστὶν ἀκοῦσαι λεγόντων ὡς Λύσανδρος μὲν ἔγραψε τοῖς ἐφόροις τάδε: 'ἀλώαντι ταὶ Ἀθῆναι, Λυσάνδρῳ δ' ἀντέγραψαν οἱ ἔφοροι: ἄρκει τό γε ἐάλωκεν.' ἀλλ' εὐπρεπείας χάριν οὗτος ὁ λόγος πέπλασται* (and cf. *Apophth. Lac.* 229 B, 5). In the same context Plutarch also quotes the actual decree (*δῶγμα*) sent back by the ephors, adding that the Athenians accepted this *σκυτάλη*, in a neat equation of message and support: cf. Plut. *Lys.* 14. 5; for the message of the ephors cf. Andoc. 3. 11–12 and 31, *Lysias* 13. 14, Xen. *Hell.* 2. 2. 20.

against a Cretan,' as the saying is, he misjudged him. For Pharnabazus, after promising to do all that he desired, openly wrote such a letter as Lysander demanded, but secretly kept another by him ready written (*φανερῶς μὲν ἔγραψεν οἷαν ὁ Λύσανδρος ἡξίωσεν ἐπιστολὴν, κρύφα δὲ εἶχεν ἑτέραν αὐτόθι γεγραμμένην*). And when it came to putting on the seals, he exchanged the documents, which looked exactly alike, and gave him the letter which had been secretly written (*ἐν δὲ τῷ τὰς σφραγίδας ἐπιβάλλειν ἐναλλάξας τὰ βιβλία μηδὲν διαφέροντα τῇ ὄψει, δίδωσιν ἐκείνην αὐτῷ τὴν κρύφα γεγραμμένην*). Accordingly, when Lysander arrived at Sparta and went into the meeting place of the ephors, as the custom is, he gave them the letter (*τὰ γράμματα*) of Pharnabazus, convinced that the greatest of the complaints against him was thus removed; for Pharnabazus was in high favour with the Lacedaemonians, because he had been, of all the King's generals, most ready to help them in the war. But when the ephors, after reading the letter, showed it to him (*ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀναγνόντες οἱ ἔφοροι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἔδειξαν αὐτῷ*), and he understood that 'Odysseus, then, is not the only man of guile,' for the time being he was mightily confounded and went away. (Plut. *Lys.* 20. 1–4, trans. Perrin slightly modified)

This did not make Lysander lose his faith in epistolary communication: we find him slightly later (Plut. *Lys.* 23) sending letters to his friends in Asia, asking them to request from Agesilaus a general for the war in Asia—the ploy initially worked, and Agesilaus took Lysander with himself on campaign. Later, Lysander, already out of favour, is presented as committing to memory a speech prepared for him by Cleon of Halicarnassus (*λόγον ἐξεμελέτα πρὸς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν γεγραμμένον*). This was meant to convince the Spartans that they should elect as king the best of them, regardless of the family. Linked to this endeavour are his beginning a collection of oracles and his attempts at bribing the Pythia, the priestess of Dodona, and the oracle of Ammon in Libya. All this culminated in an extraordinary stratagem in which a pretended son of Apollo should have reclaimed some very ancient tablets held in Delphi, which contained oracular responses and prophecies stating that 'it was more for the honour and interest of the Spartans to choose their kings from the best citizens'.⁷⁴ But this endeavour too failed, and the story became public after Lysander's death. The last epistolary theme appearing in connection with Lysander is the topical one of the intercepted letter: it also signifies his death. Plutarch narrates that before the battle of Haliartus (395 BC), Lysander sent a letter to Pausanias (*ἔπεμψε δὲ τῷ Πausανίᾳ γράμματα*), asking him to leave Plataea and join forces with him at Haliartus. The letter (*ταῦτα τὰ γράμματα*) was, however, intercepted and read by the Thebans, who managed to reach Haliartus before Lysander; when the latter attacked alone (Pausanias was marching from Plataea to Thespieae), he was killed, and the army routed (Plut. *Lys.* 28. 2–5).

A familiarity with letter writing is also attributed by Plutarch to Agesilaus and his son Archidamus. A longish letter (clearly fictive) is quoted in its entirety, with which Agesilaus in writing back to the ephors showed his natural superiority;⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Plut. *Lys.* 25–6; see especially, for the ancient oracles on tablets, to be handed over only to a son of Apollo who could prove his descent, 26. 2: *ὥς ἐν γράμμασιν ἀπορρήτοις ὑπὸ τῶν ἱερέων φυλάττοντο παμπάλαιοι δὴ τινες χρησμοί, καὶ λαβεῖν οὐκ ἔξεστι τούτους οὐδ' ἐντυχεῖν θεμιτόν, εἰ μὴ τις ἄρα γεγονὼς ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος ἀφίκοιτο τῷ πολλῷ χρόνῳ καὶ σύνθημα τοῖς φυλάττουσι τῆς γενέσεως γνώριμον παρασχὼν κομίσαιτο τὰς δέλτους ἐν αἷς ἦσαν οἱ χρησμοί*. The story was already in Ephorus.

⁷⁵ *Apophth.* Lac. 211 BC: *Καὶ ἀντέγραψε τοῖς ἐφόροις ἐπιστολὴν τήνδε: "Ἀγησίλαος τοῖς ἐφόροις χαίρειν· τὰν πολλὰν τὰς Ἀσίας κατεστρεψάμεθα καὶ τὼς βαρβάρως ἐλάσαμεν καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἰωνίᾳ ὅπλα ἐποιήσαμεν πολλὰ· ἐπεὶ δὲ κέλεσθαι με κατὰ τὰν προθεσίαν παραγίνεισθαι, ἔπομαι τὰ ἐπιστολὰ, σχεδὸν δ'*

another anecdote concerns his refusal to write letters of recommendation on the grounds that his friends would naturally act justly, even without a recommendation: this betrays a certain contempt towards the genre (*Apophth. Lac.* 212 Ε). Especially informative for the question of the traditional character of these anecdotes is *Ages.* 23. 6 = *Apophth. Lac.* 213 DE (no. 69), retelling a story already narrated in Xenophon's *Agesilaus* (8. 3, discussed above, 154–5), concerning the Spartan king's refusal to accept letters from the Great King.

As for Archidamus, who had received a harsh letter from Philip II after Chaeronea, he reportedly wrote back that 'were he to measure his shadow now, he would not find it any longer than before his victory' (*Apophth. Lac.* 218 EF, but elsewhere this is a riposte made orally); a remarkably laconic letter of his to the Eleans is also known (*Apophth. Lac.* 219 Α). Another very typical Spartan answer to a letter of Philip II is preserved in *Apophth. Lac.* 235 AB (cf. 513 Α): 'Concerning what you wrote to us, no' (*περὶ ὧν ἄμυν ἔγραψας, οὐ*).

The *Apophthegmata* further preserve the letter of an Hippocratidas to a Carian governor (222 AB), while in 225 CD Plutarch transcribes an epistolary exchange between Leonidas and Xerxes(!) Finally, a few letters are attributed to Spartan mothers.⁷⁶ Among these, particularly interesting is the letter quoted in the *Sayings of Spartan Women* and attributed to Pedaritus' mother Teleutia: after having listened to the complaints of some Chian exiles in Sparta, she wrote severely to her son, saying:

ἡ μήτηρ Παιδαρήτωρ ἢ βελτίονα πράσσει ἢ αὐθι μένε, ἀπογνοὺς τὰν ἐς Σπάρτα σωτηρίαν. ([Plut.] *Apophth. Lacaen.* 241 Ε, 11)

Your mother to Pedaritus: either behave better, or remain where you are, and don't expect a safe return to Sparta.

In his eighth book, Thucydides had mentioned a letter of Pedaritus to Astyochus (Thuc. 8. 33. 3), as well as another letter accusing Astyochus and sent to Sparta (Thuc. 8. 38. 4). Pedaritus' words must have carried weight in Sparta if his message could provoke such a quick reaction as the one described in Thucydides;⁷⁷ at any rate, the letter of the *Apophthegmata* is predicated on the assumption of a powerful and literate family.

These letters are clearly part of a tradition that grew in time; the initial corpus was enlarged through the addition of variants. Plutarch is the main collector, but versions are preserved in other authors too. The exchange between Menecrates and Agesilaus for instance, narrated three times in the same way, with the same terms and the same protagonists in Plutarch (in *Ages.* 21. 5, in *Apophth. Regum et Imperatorum* 191 Α no. 5, and in *Apophth. Lac.* 213 Α), is adjusted in Athenaeus (7. 289 DE) and Aelianus (VH 12. 51) to an exchange between Menecrates and Philip II of Macedon. While these mainly Plutarchan stories of Spartan letters are evident fictions, and while their number is minimal when compared to the

αὐτὰν καὶ φθασῶ· ἄρχω γὰρ οὐκ ἐμαντῶ ἄρχάν, ἀλλὰ τῇ πόλει καὶ τοῖς συμμάχοις· καὶ τότε ἄρχων ἄρχει ἀλαθέως κατὰ δίκαν, ὅταν καὶ ἄρχηται ὑπὸ τε νόμων καὶ ἐφόρων ἢ οἷοι ἂν ἄλλοι ἐν πόλει ἄρχοντες ὦσιν."

⁷⁶ e.g. *Apophth. Lacaen.* 241 Ε 10; note Gorgo's ability to understand Demaratus' stratagem, above, 113.

⁷⁷ Thuc. 8. 39. 2, cf. Dover 1981: 69; Hornblower 2008: 844, 861–3; and above, 146–7.

number of sayings of these same Spartans, these stories do support the general hypothesis of a relatively frequent use of epistolary writing for official—and unofficial—communication in Sparta.

7.2.3. Athens

After having looked at some letter-writing poleis on the list, it is important to examine a relative absence: Athens—all the more striking, since it is the polis that always comes to the fore when discussing issues of literacy. In the list given in appendix 3, Athens appears eight times, in nos. 27, 36, 42, 45, 46, 54, and 62–3.⁷⁸ The first document is a letter written by the Athenian *strategoi* to the *epimeletes* of Delos Charmides and accompanying a Roman *senatus consultum*; it was inscribed in Delos and is dated post 164 BC. The second document is a letter dated to shortly after the mid-second century BC, sent by the archons and the city of Delphi to the Athenian boule and demos, acknowledging receipt of a psephisma and honouring the Athenian demos; we have this letter (which moves into a decree halfway through) because it was inscribed in Delphi. The other documents have all been inscribed in Athens—but none of them was written by Athens as a polis. Six letters publicly inscribed in Athens, out of a list numbering all in all seventy-four official letters, might not seem so few. But a closer look shows that the second to fourth documents are letters from the Amphictions concerning the Dionysiac artists: these are not documents concerning the polis, but a community within the polis, and the initiative for their inscription will have rested with the Dionysiac artists. The fifth letter comes from Delphi as well, and concerns honours for a priestess (but ll. 44 and 52 are heavily restored—the text is almost a matter of guesswork). And the final two documents are a letter sent by the *genos* of the Gephyraioi to Delphi in order to renew the old friendship and to consult the oracle, and the answer of the Delphians accompanying the text of the oracle received. Here too, the Gephyraioi will have taken care of the inscription. In short, all six letters found in Athens have to do with Delphi—none of them originates from Athens itself, and they tend to concern specific ‘communities within the community’; neither in Athens nor elsewhere is it possible to find any inscribed letters written by the Athenian boule and demos (although note two instances in which the sender is unknown but has been suspected to be Athens: nos. 55 and 56). As for the Delian letter, it is sent by the Athenian *strategoi* (note the heading *οἱ στρατηγοὶ Χαρμίδει ἐπιμελεῖν | τεῖ Δήλου χαίρειν*) to accompany a decision taken by the Roman senate: it thus fits into the pattern of communication internal to a polis, and its inscription was most certainly due to the initiative of the priest, Demetrius of Rheneia, who benefited from the decision of the Senate and, consequently, of the Athenians, and who had an interest in having this put on stone.⁷⁹ One further point worth noting is that the series begins relatively late—in 164 BC at the earliest

⁷⁸ One may want to keep in mind also the letter written by the Delphians to the Dionysiac *technitai* of Athens, no. 61; the letter was inscribed in Delphi, but on the wall of the Treasury of the Athenians.

⁷⁹ See on this document Ferrary 2009: 126–7; particularly interesting is Ferrary’s interpretation of the lack of a Roman letter, which he sees as consistent with the concern of the Senate not to appear to be giving orders to the Athenians.

(in Delos) and in 134 BC at Athens. Finally, eight letters are simply as nothing when compared to the thousands of extant epigraphical documents from Athens.

7.3. INTERPRETATION

How to interpret the data collected in the list given in appendix 3? For most cities, the data are so scanty that it is better to refrain from proposing interpretations; for others, variations can be traced, that show that the same format was not systematically employed.⁸⁰ Yet some particular clusters seem too pronounced to be explained away as accidents or idiosyncrasies. Those poleis that made official (if only occasional) use of epistolary communication or were happy to display a letter from another polis in the midst of their own city share (I submit) a common trait: a weakly developed sense of the distinction between public and private.⁸¹ Sparta was notoriously not a democracy, it was ruled by a tight-knit oligarchy; the interference of the polis in all spheres of life was very strong. Similarly, in their analysis of the decrees of the Greek poleis Rhodes and Lewis remark apropos of Crete that a number of features imply that in the Hellenistic period the Cretan poleis were not among the most democratic of the Greek world.⁸² If we are to see 'letters' rather than generic 'writings of all sorts' in the *γράμματα* mentioned in the constitutional regulation from Euromos concerning the introduction of two new magistracies (SEG 43, 707, ll. 12–15: *γράμματα δὲ ἅμιν ποὺ δέξει πέμπεσθαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως ἢ ὑπὲρ ἄλλου | τινὸς διὰ τῶν ἀρχείων τούτων ἐξαποστελλέσθω γραφόμενα ἐ- | [πί τε] τῶν κόσμων καὶ τῶν προστατῶν, μὴ ἐξουσία δὲ ἔστω μηδὲ ὁ- | 15 [ποτέρῳ] τῶν ἀρχείων τούτων καθ' ἰδίαν γράμματα πέμπειν*, 'and if letters must be sent by these magistrates concerning the city or any other matter, let there be sent a letter written in the presence of both the *kosmoi* and the *prostatiai*, and let it not be allowed for [either] of these magistrates to send a letter on his own'), then it is interesting to note the presence at Euromos of the Cretan institution of the *κόσμοι*, which may have resulted from an influx of Cretans into the citizen body; the clause on letters (if letters they are) might have to do with Cretan habit.⁸³ Another place where letter writing on a relatively important scale seems to have

⁸⁰ The importance of letter writing for each polis could possibly be evaluated by comparing, case by case, the number of extant decrees for internal matters, the number of extant decrees on external matters, and the number of letters. But very high numbers would be needed to counter the accidents of chance survival.

⁸¹ The date at which these letters begin to appear fits the change visible in the composition of the council at the 'basse époque hellénistique': see Hamon 2005.

⁸² Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 312: 'Although Crete has produced some of the earliest public documents in the Greek world, such considerations as the prominence of the *kosmoi*, the failure in most cities to identify the authors of decrees, and the failure in decrees which provide for an appointment after the enactment of the decree to stipulate that the appointment is to be made from all citizens, suggest that in the Hellenistic period the many small cities of Crete were not among the most democratic in Greece.'

⁸³ Decree from Euromos: cf. Ma 1999: 339–40 (no. 30), whose translation I quote; the ample discussion of Savalli-Lestrade 2010: 138–42 (who insists on 'letters', and develops the possibility of a massive insertion of Cretans into the civic body when Euromos was refounded as Philippi) and 142–8; Virgilio 2011: 39. Boffo 2003: 50 translates simply 'scritti'.

been the norm is Sicyon (see nos. 33–5, two letters of Sicyon to Argos, and one of Kerynia to Sicyon, all dated to after 146 BC): remarkably, in this period there is no record of an assembly in Sicyon.⁸⁴ If we accept the thesis that the distinction between public and private is more marked in democratic systems, while it is often blurred in oligarchies, and non-existent, at least in theory, for kings, then we could posit a correlation between the use of letters (or rather: a greater facility in the use of letters) and the latter types of regime.

Before drawing conclusions, an issue should be addressed, namely that of the chronology. The inscription on stone of letters written by poleis seems to be a relatively late feature: the oldest documents so far discovered are the two letters of Istron and Phaistos to Cos, for the *asylia* of 242 BC; next is a covering letter of the inhabitants of Thessalonike to the Delians, dated to c.230 BC, accompanying a decree of the same Thessalonikeis (it is fitting that one of the earliest epigraphically attested letter from a polis should come from one founded c.315 BC by the Macedonian king Cassander on the site of Thermae, in an area that was under Macedonian control!) But if we accept that Ptolemy, when writing to Telmessos that he had received their letter (*ἐπιστολή*), indeed meant a letter, then we must accept that at least by 279 BC a polis could write an official letter in the context of interstate relations.⁸⁵ This is actually not surprising. The letter sent by Adeimantos of Lampsakos to Demetrios shows that not just Adeimantos himself, but all the king's 'friends' (who will have been members of the city elites coming from all over the Greek world) had written letters on the occasion of the re-establishment of the Corinthian league, and had had them inscribed:

Ἀδείμαντος vacat βασιλεῖ Δημητρίῳ χαίρ[ειν]· τό τε ψήφισμα ὃ ἐπεποίητο οἱ Ἀμφικτίονες πέ[ρ]υ- | σι προθέντες μὲν ἐν Ἰσθμίοις, ἐπικυρώσα[ν]τες | δὲ ἐν Δελφοῖς, ἀπ[έ]στ[αλ]κα καθάπερ ὦιον δεῖν· [όμοί]- | [ω]ς δὲ καὶ τὰς παρὰ τῶν φίλων ἐπιστολάς, ἵνα παρακολουθῇς ἐκάστοις [δεδογμέν]ον, ἀναγράψαντας εἰστ[ή]λην | [κατ]ὰ τὸ γεγόμενον δόγμα ἀναθεῖναι ὃ κ[αὶ] ἐπ[ε]ποιήκειμεν ἐν τῷ σ[υνεδρίῳ] κ[αὶ] τὰ γεγονότα δημ[ι] - c.4 - | | [φιλάνθρωπα π]αρά τῶν Ἀμφικτιό[ν]ων π[ι] - c.7 - | OI[] - - - c.25 - - - | QNBOY- AO[] - c.8 - | (SEG 45, 479 = CID 4 no. 11, ll. 1–5)

'Adeimantos to King Demetrios, greetings! I have sent you, as you wished, the decree which the Amphictions made last year, having proposed it at the Isthmia and ratified at Delphi; and equally also the letters from the friends (*philoi*), so that you may know that to each it has seemed good, having inscribed (the letters) on a stele, to dedicate it, according to the decision (*dogma*) which we took in the Synedrion . . . and the honours voted by the Amphictions . . .

This kind of collective letter writing (and letter inscribing) by members of the elite must have made a huge impression: if the decision had been taken at the Synedrion to inscribe all these letters—one would like to know where: in Delphi, as a dossier? in the city of origin of each friend?—then it had a value that went far beyond the individual approval of the various *philoi*.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 76. Argos too wrote letters: cf. *I. Magnesia* 40, app. 3 no. 7.

⁸⁵ Above, nn. 45 and 46.

⁸⁶ The text we have was inscribed in the early second century BC, with other documents, on a huge pillar (at least 3 m high) probably bearing a statue of Perseus; Laroche, *CID* 4, no. 11 argues persuasively that Perseus republished old documents, in order to emphasize, in the years preceding the third Macedonian war, the good relations existing from the beginning between the Antigonids, the

In discussing the origins of the format assumed by the Hellenistic royal letter Welles argued that such letters derived from city-decrees, which the chancery personnel took as their models. Or, to put it more precisely, he argued that 'the official letter to an individual was originally in form a private letter; the official letter to a community was based on the prevailing form of communication between communities, the city decree.'⁸⁷ Welles did not discuss the letters sent by poleis, but the logical step from his point of view would have been to assume that the poleis in their turn imitated the habit of the Hellenistic kings.

In this strong version, there are difficulties with the argument. First, the distinction between official letters sent to individuals and official letters sent to communities seems to complicate matters unnecessarily, since there is no real difference in the way both are couched, either in the source of the letter's authority or in how it will work.⁸⁸ Secondly, the important point is surely the hypothesis of a derivation of the royal letter from the city-decree. We have seen above a number of experiments by kings and other communities with the form of the city-decree, adapted with greater or lesser success and skill to the needs of the moment. Are Hellenistic royal letters the result of a similar development, or could the Hellenistic chanceries rely on a stable epistolary format? Although the Greeks sent letters at the latest from the mid-sixth century onwards, a stable format for epistolary correspondence is traceable in our evidence only from the mid-fourth century onwards. The first normative statements concerning the nature and the form of a letter are in Isocrates. This means that there was no standard model earlier; at the same time, we know, because our texts mention them, that letters were already being written, and in reasonably high numbers—numbers which will only increase in the course of the fourth century. This is when the various royal chanceries develop their specific models.

In general, it is reasonable to assume that a royal answer to a decree will have been couched in terms that followed quite closely those of the decree which occasioned it. The model of the *Empfängerformular* will have worked also in this case, with royal chanceries looking at the texts of decrees and modelling their answers on them (and poleis looking at royal letters and deciding how to deal with them). This explains the existence of a common, shared language of euergetism. However, we have also noted above the existence of important structural differences between royal letters and decrees, as well as of specific choices in the use of some key words (*δοκέω*, *ἐπειδὴ*). I suggest that on the level of the semantic choices, these differences can be seen as instances of inverse modelling and distantiation, while at the structural level they reflect the continuous thread that runs from private letters to royal letters. Although it is correct to say that the Hellenistic chanceries will have adapted forms and elements of the city-decrees for the varied necessities of the royal correspondence, at a more fundamental level

Amphictions, and the Greek world at large. On Adeimantos and his role in liaising between king and cities see Wallace 2013: 149–51, with a slightly different interpretation of the letters, which he takes to be *dogmata* of the league.

⁸⁷ Welles 1934: pp. xlii f. He partly contradicts himself, since elsewhere he states that 'the letters inherited from both their parents, though less from the city decree than from the private letter, a taste for brevity and simplicity' (p. xlii), thus acknowledging the strong influence of the private letter.

⁸⁸ Moreover, at least in Macedon, royal letters concerning a community would be addressed to the epistates (see Mari 2006).

they were continuing a practice of letter writing for personal purposes that was much more ancient, and one that through Macedon could possibly be traced back to Achaemenid practices; the city-decree marked something completely new in terms of communicative strategies.

What is the place of the letters of poleis in this picture—should we see them as the consequence of the influence of royal letters on the political life of the Hellenistic world? Because of the high number of unknown variables occasioned by the accidents of transmission and the scarcity of the epigraphical material, it would be dangerous to insist on excessively clear-cut distinctions. Yet it remains the case that there is a strong opposition between the language of the kings (royal letters) and that of the polis (decrees). At the same time, some poleis made use of letters for official interstate communication, and most certainly did so for official internal communication. This means that the epistolary language cannot be considered a format totally external to the language of the polis—all the more so since those cities which used letters to transmit decisions did not see any problem in combining the structure of the letter with the vocabulary of the decree. At least in the case of Sparta, the use of the epistolary format for communications seems to be traditional. It is attested already at the beginning of the fifth century BC, and cannot therefore be interpreted as an imitation of the habit of Hellenistic monarchs of sending letters. The other place where we find a high number of official letters is Crete: already Aristotle had remarked on the similarity between the two constitutional systems of Crete and Sparta.⁸⁹ It must be admitted that in the case of the Cretan poleis it is difficult to speak with certainty of a 'traditional' use of the epistolary format: the first preserved letters, both private and public ones, are to be dated to around 200 BC; the literary tradition does not provide us with any further information. Moreover, the existing decrees show modifications in the formulary in the Hellenistic period. But for Sparta at any rate, and very probably for some of the other poleis for which the sending and/or inscribing of official letters is attested, the use of letters for official communication (and the relative ease with which a monumental status was conferred on them) has to be explained by the use in a non-democratic regime of formats typical of private communication also for the sphere which we should rather define as public.⁹⁰ If this is correct, then the royal chanceries had their models for official epistolary writing already within the world of the Greek poleis, models that they then developed further. It is a sign of the strong democratic feeling in other Greek poleis that this format was for a long time eschewed (or at least not monumentalized), even in those situations where it might have seemed appropriate, such as for correspondence with other poleis.

⁸⁹ Arist. *Pol.* 1270^b28–31 criticizes the tendency of the ephors to judge on the basis of their opinions rather than according to written laws; a similar criticism is made also of the Cretan *kosmoi* (*Pol.* 1272^a35–9). See Millender 2001: 132–3 and nn. 52–3.

⁹⁰ Interestingly, in the examination of the types of writing most used in archaic and early classical Greece made by Stoddart and Whitley 1988 and Whitley 1999, Crete had appeared as a society in which a restricted elite made a public use of writing, as opposed to Attica, in which personal writing by craftsmen and aristocrats competing for prestige would have been widespread. See above, 30–1.

Epilogue

I set out to investigate the use of writing for long-distance communication in the ancient Greek world. In particular I wanted to explore both the development of letter writing until it became the instrument of royal communication and the connotations acquired by official correspondence, as opposed to public speech or other forms of writing. The preceding chapters show, I believe, that there were definite differences in when letter writing began to be used, and in how letter writing (and writing *tout court*) was viewed within different parts of the Greek world; but also, that things changed, and that the important watershed in Greece, so far as letter writing is concerned, is the period at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth century. The evidence shows that writing was used in Greece to send messages over a distance already in the mid-sixth century BC, from the Black Sea to Spain (ch. 2); and given the unpredictability of epigraphic finds and the likely use of perishable supports, we may wish to posit the same practice for other areas of the Mediterranean. However, these early letters are couched in a very individual language, reflecting closely the spoken language; they almost entirely lack the formulae that will characterize later Greek letter writing. Such a lack of standardized formulae is evident also in the letters transmitted through the literary tradition in Herodotus and Thucydides; clearly, letter writing was not yet a widespread activity. It is only in the last quarter of the fifth century that letters enter the 'literary' scene (chs. 4, 5). In Herodotus' work, they are (mainly) the prerogative of tyrants and oriental kings; in the Greek world, their use appears linked to a desire for secrecy, usually unhealthy—or to the desire of avoiding face-to-face confrontation, which is again something deemed to be rather unhealthy. Of course, the Herodotean letters (and those that appear in Thucydides' and Xenophon's work) are not the everyday private messages that individuals would send to each other: they play a role in interstate relations. A first crucial point emerges here: in itself, a letter is but the transcription of an oral message (and this remains valid, even from the formal viewpoint, until the mid-fourth century), and as such its use is not viewed in any way differently from that of an oral message (chs. 3, 4). A letter and an oral message may both be truthful or deceitful. However, for various reasons, the medium acquires negative connotations when use of it is made for transactions concerning not the private but the public sphere, and more specifically interstate relations. That this should be observable especially in Athens is not surprising, nor is it just a problem of sources: Athens is the polis which, already in Pericles' day, the third quarter of the fifth century, had advanced most towards differentiation between a private and a public sphere. In areas of the Greek world where this differentiation was less marked, such as Sparta or Crete,

the letter may have been felt, and probably was felt, to be an unproblematic instrument for managing public policies (ch. 7). Along the same lines, it is difficult—not to say impossible—to ascertain what exactly lies behind Lucian's story concerning Cleon's use of a written format, preceded by the apostrophe *χαίρειν*, to liaise with the Athenians, but passages from comedy and tragedy testify to an unease, an underlying worry, about epistolary communication. This concern is particularly evident in Euripidean tragedy: interestingly, Euripides' questioning does not involve writing as such, but is specifically focused on communication by letter. Finally, one more general reason for the often negative Greek perception of letter writing may lie in the use made of it by the Persian king for controlling his empire. However, it seems more likely that it was the socio-political conditions (the fragmentation of the Greek world and the lack of a unified postal system, implying that a messenger was anyway obliged to cover the entire distance) that almost by necessity rendered letter writing in official contexts something often unnecessary, and always open to the suspicion of involving some unsavoury activities (here Bellerophon's letter functioned as a model, on which variations would be played).

The very nature of the letter would have implied, in the Greek world, this kind of connotation: a letter is a personal message, strongly marked by the presence of an 'I' addressing a 'You', and sealed, in other words, excluding others from the exchange. In a private context this is by and large unproblematic, unless these private dealings end up in a law-court; for in this context the choice of a private, sealed means of communicating may be given a negative slant (ch. 6). But when used at the public level, for the polis's affairs, sealed, personal communication may be problematic. Here, however, geographical differences acquire importance. Most of our evidence is Athenian, and so can be used only with caution for drawing inferences about the rest of the Greek world; but it would seem that some communities (Sparta, for instance) had fewer difficulties with written communication than others (such as Athens). There is nothing like the traditions surrounding the Spartan *skytale* for Athens. Of course Athenian generals did send reports, which would be read by the council and in the Assembly, and then kept in the Metroon: this shows that in Athens, the letter (the long-distance message) had to be open and unsealed for it to be accepted at the official level. It may not be an accident that the format of the 'open letter', as used, for instance, by Isocrates, developed in Athens, and exactly in the first half of the fourth century (ch. 6).

In the preceding paragraph I have focused on the uses of letter writing for official communications internal to a polis; at that level, the 'secrecy' was the aspect that might have been negatively focused upon. When used for exchanges at the interstate level, the other feature of the letter, its being addressed by an 'I' to a 'You', would have brought further uneasiness. Comparison with the city decree brings this into sharper focus: a decree is expressed in the third person; the polis speaks, in the past, and there is no addressee. The decree is a type of format that highlights (and suits perfectly) the strong ideological tendency to autarky typical of all Greek poleis. A letter, however, must have an addressee; moreover, a feature of epistolary correspondence is the fact that the acceptance of a letter implies entering into an exchange, into a discourse initiated by the other. This goes a long way towards explaining the strange conversations between cities and kings in the Hellenistic period, with kings writing letters, and cities sending back decrees.

In the fourth century, an epistolary language appropriate to, and standard for, private communication takes shape; in this same period, the chanceries of the Macedonian kings, and then of their successors, adapt this private form of communication to interact with the Greek poleis. Just as they had accepted entering into discussion with the Persian king, the Greek cities entered into discussion with the Hellenistic kings; and this may in a certain measure explain why from the mid-third century BC on we find some cities writing letters for official communication that get inscribed on stone. The work of Polybius reflects this evolution: while he (still) tends to associate epistolography mainly with Hellenistic kings and the Romans, thus continuing the tradition of the letter as ideologically marked, his history also recognizes the writing of letters as a standard medium of diplomacy throughout the Mediterranean world. From early on, the letter had been a widespread means of personal communication; but by now, it has also become an accepted instrument of interstate communication, even if some areas appear to have resisted longer than others.

APPENDIX 1

Archaic and Classical Documentary Letters

The arrangement followed is regional, with the two regions that provide the most instances of private letters, the Black Sea area (nos. 1–22) and the gulf of Massilia (nos. 23–31), coming first, then Sicily (no. 32), the Chalkidike (nos. 33–4), and finally Athens (nos. 35–42). Within each area, inscriptions are listed in rough chronological order, with uncertain cases or references to unpublished documents at the end of each group. I have indicated the first edition and the main contributions, but have not attempted a full bibliographical coverage for each document; the apparatus is likewise selective.

A. Certain and Probable Letters

Black Sea Region

1. Private letter, dated 550–500 BC, on a tightly rolled-up thin rectangular lead sheet (c.15.3 × 6.5 × 0.1 cm), inscribed on both sides (opisthographic), found in Berezan (Olbia) in 1970.

Vinogradov 1971 (with photograph and facsimile; cf. *SEG* 26, 845); Bravo 1974 (cf. Bravo 1977); Dubois 1996, no. 23 (with facsimile); Wilson 1997–8: 35–8; Trapp 2003: 50–1, 195–8; Bravo 2011 (with *BE* 2012, no. 306); cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E1.

Outside: Ἀχιλλοδώρῳ τὸ μολί-
βδιον παρὰ τὸμ παῖδα
κἀναξαγόρην.

Inside: ὦ Πρωταγόρῃ, ὁ πατήρ τοι ἐπιστέλλῃ, ἀδικεῖται
ὑπὸ Ματασνος· δολῶται γάρ μιν καὶ τὸ
φορτηγείῳ ἀπεστέρεσεν. ἐλθὼμ παρ' Ἀναξαγόρῃ(<-)ρην
ἀπήγησαι· φησι γὰρ αὐτὸν Ἀναξαγόρῳ
5 δόλον εἶναι μυθεόμενος· “τᾶμ' Ἀνα<ξ>αγόρης ἔχῃ
καὶ δόλος καὶ δόλας κοίκίαις”. ὁ δὲ ἀναβῶν τε
καὶ οὐ φησιν εἶναι οὐδὲν ἑωυτῷ τε καὶ Ματασ<ν>ι
καὶ φησιν εἶναι ἐλεόθερος καὶ οὐδὲν εἶναι ἑωυτ<ῶ>ι
καὶ Ματα<τα>σιν<ι>. ἔ δέ τι αὐτῷ τε κἀναξαγόρῃ, αὐτοὶ
10 οἶδασιν κατὰ σφᾶς αὐτός. ταῦτ' Ἀναξαγόρῃ λέγῃν
καὶ τῇ γυναικί. ἕτερα δέ τοι ἐπιστέλλῃ· τῇμ μητέρα
καὶ τὸς ἀδελ<φ>εός, <ο>ἷ ἔσιν ἐν Ἀρβινάτησιν, ἄγῃν ἐς τῇμ πόλιν·
αὐτὸς δέ γ' ὁ νεῶρος ἐλθὼμ παρὰ μιν <ἰ>θύωρα καταβήσεται.

Outside: Achillodoros' piece of lead, to his son and Anaxagoras.

Inside: Protagoras, your father sends instructions to you. He is being wronged by Matasys, for he is enslaving him and has deprived him of his cargo-carrier [or: of his position as a carrier; or: of the shipment]. Go to Anaxagoras and tell him the story, for he [Matasys] asserts that he [Achillodoros] is the slave of Anaxagoras, claiming: 'Anaxagoras has my property, slaves, both female and male, and houses.' But he [Achillodoros] disputes it and denies that there is anything between him and Matasys and says that he is free and that there is nothing between him and Matasys. But what there is between him and Anaxagoras, they alone know. Tell this to Anaxagoras and the (his?) wife. Besides, he sends you these other instructions: take the (your?) mother and the (your?) brothers, who are among the Arbinatai,

to the city. The ship-guard himself [or: Euneoros himself], having come to him, will go directly down [or: down to Thyora].

2. Private fragmentary letter from Berezan, c.540–535 BC, found in a pit with pottery dated not later than the third quarter of the sixth century BC. The text is inscribed boustrophedon on two lead fragments, measuring c.4.5 × 5.5 × 0.05 and 4.8 × 8.7 × 0.05 cm respectively and folded three times over in ‘concertina’; the central part is lost.

(A. S. Rusjaeva, in *Kultura naselenija Ol’vii i ee okrygi v arkhaičeskoe vremja* (Kiev, 1997), 152, citing Vinogradov); Vinogradov 1998: 154–7 (with photographs and facsimile; SEG 48, 988); Dana 2007: 70–2; Bravo 2007: 58–66. Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E3.

Παρά [τοῦ δεινός vel τὸν δεινὰ - -] ΑΙΙ[.] τ[-] εἶ-
 παί, θέλωμι[- - - - - ὥς τά]χιστα εἶ-
 ναι : Δ[- - - - - ἀπο?] δότε : τῶν γὰρ
 ἐνθῆνδε ἄτα β[όλομαι ? ἀποσ]τέλλεν, ὅ-
 5 πανεταί [- - - - -] παῖδα τήν τοι ἄγει
 παρὰ Μέλανο[ς - - - - - ἀπο?] δόναι

1: τ[ί?] Vinogradov || 1–2: εἶπαί = εἶπε, ed. pr.? (in SEG 48, 988); recent Ionian imperative (Dana); aorist infinitive, used in place of the second aorist imperative εἶπέ? || 4: ἄτα=ἄσσα (with psilosis; the second letter is a sampi, ed. pr., with parallels. || 4–5: ὕπανεταί = ὕπανείταί, middle/pass. perf. of ὑπανίημι: ‘to slacken, remit a little’ (‘he gave in’) or impersonal passive form (‘given in’), ed. pr. || 5: τήν Vinogradov 1987, and Dubois in Dana 2007; τήν Vinogradov 1998.

From X [to Z] say (or: To X, Z said), I should like . . . to be as soon as possible . . . you return; for the things [property, money, goods] that (I want?) to send from here, he relinquished . . . the slave-girl whom he brings to you from Melas . . . send back.

Vinogradov’s understanding of the first two lines, ‘From such and such (or to such and such) . . . what would he have said? I would like . . .’ (1998: 156), is not very convincing. The aorist infinitive εἶπαί at ll. 1–2 (a form familiar from Herodotus) may be here used in place of the second aorist imperative εἶπέ, as suggested by Dubois. This has then to be understood as a message to one person (see also 5: τοι), who is asked to transmit a request to others (θέλωμι . . . εἶναι . . ., and the second person imperative plural]δότε at l. 3), as well as to do something himself (l. 5: τοι). Alternatively, on the first editor’s proposal that εἶπαί = εἶπε, we might assume that the first line contained the name of the addressee (Παρά [τὸν δεινὰ) and that of the sender in the nominative, followed by a verb of saying in the past (To X, Z said: ‘I would like’); one could compare with the early literary letters (‘Amasis to Polykrates thus says’). The oscillation between plural and singular addressees in what follows (ἀπο?] δότε l. 3 and τοι l. 5) is not really problematic, as it can reflect a situation in which a person is the main representative of a group. A further problem is caused by the difficult ὕπανεταί at l. 5: Vinogradov suggests that this may be a third person singular perfect middle (ὕπανεταί = ὕπανείταί ‘he has relinquished’, i.e. he has no further claims on), which would introduce yet another person in the transaction. Bravo 2007 proposes a very different interpretation, based on the hypothesis of a religious text (three ‘Orphic’ bone tablets dated to the fifth century BC have been found in Olbia, SEG 28, 659–61); the phraseology could be compared to that of other ‘Orphic’ lamellae: at l. 1–2, παρ’ αἰὺτήν τήν τελευτήν τοῖσι κάτω δ]αίμ[οσ]ι[ν] εἶ -]παί, with the injunction to ‘tell’ frequent in the lamellae; at l. 5, [- - Γῆς καὶ Ὀρανὸ] παῖδα could refer to the mystic identity of the dead woman. If this is correct, this piece of lead would be the earliest Orphic instruction text to date, and not a letter.

3. Private letter on a lead sheet broken on both right and left margins (3.8 × 3.8 × 0.05 cm), opisthographic, from the agora of Olbia, c.525–500 BC.

Vinogradov 1998: 157–60 (with photographs and facsimile; SEG 48, 1011); Dana 2007: 72–5; Bravo 2007: 66–74; cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E4. Punctuation marks (:) are present only in the recto; this contrasts with the fact that the two sides seem to have been written

by the same, very careful hand (so Vinogradov 1998: 157–8; the photographs bear this out). As pointed out by Eidinow and Taylor (2010: 55), these are indeed probably two letters: the lead has been reused, possibly by the same writer. Bravo however recognizes hexameters in B and consequently interprets the tablet as containing Orphic religious and moral recommendations.

- A. [- - -] μέγας καὶ [- -]
 [- - -] ἐς ἰσάτων : / [- -]
 [- - - π]ρότερον Ε (or Δ) [- -]
 [- - -]ς καὶ : κἀνδῶλ[ον? - -]
 5 [- - -] καὶ ρόν : ταῦτα / [- -]
 [- - -] ξίην : ἀνα[- -]
 [- - -] ἐὰν αὐτ[- -]
- B. [- - -] μαι νῆει[- -]
 [- - -] κ' ὁκτῶ ἰσαί[ος - -]
 [- ἦν ἀπο]διδῶ, δέκεσθ' II [- -]
 [- - σι]δῆρὸς καὶ σσαίος[- -]
 5 [- - ἀπ]οδώσεν μῆ[δέν? - -]
 [- - -] ἐόντων μ[ὴ e.g. πλείων - -]
 [- - -] καὶ σ[ι]σύργ[ας - -]
 [- - -] ι. Vacat

B 2: Vinogradov; [ἐστι γὰρ] ρ οὐτως αἶ[σα Bravo || 6–7: Dana; σ[ί]συργ[αν ed. pr

- A. . . . big and . . . for the blue dye . . . before . . . and black clothing . . . opportunity, these . . . good value . . . if . . .
 B. . . . to the son . . . and equally eight . . . if I give back, receive . . . of iron and as many . . . not give anything back . . . being not [? more than?] . . . and woollen coats . . .

A. The fragmentary state of the document makes it difficult to understand its content; comparison with the letters on lead of Artikon and Mnesiergos (below, nos. 12 and 35), as well as with those scratched on ostraka from Kerkinitis (below, no. 8), from Gorgippia (below, no. 13), or from the Athenian agora (no. 32 and 34) leads one to suppose that this text too probably referred to commodities and household goods (so Vinogradov 1998: 160, Dana 2007): *isatis* indicates a blue dye; *kandolos* might refer to a Lydian dish (Vinogradov 1998: 158), or to black clothing (Dana).

B. At l. 1]μαι may be a verb-ending in the first person. Eidinow and Taylor 2010: 32 and 55 suggest that these are 'directions to the writer's son'; this is possible (it would work better if]μαι were the ending of the writer's name, which is impossible, or the son's, which is hardly likely in Ionic). Other interpretations, in which the son is a third party, are also possible. At B. l. 3 the two verbal forms ἀπο]διδῶ and δέκεσθ' refer the first one to the sender, in the first person, while the second must concern the addressees. Objects in iron are mentioned in B l. 4, and fur coats in B l. 7. Vinogradov 1998: 159 points out that καὶ σσαίος corresponds to καὶ ἰσαίους, and that this form is attested in the Milesian *lex sacra* of the *Molpoi* (LSAM 50. 9/10).

4. Private letter (or tag?) on a lead sheet (3.4 × 7 × 0.05 cm), folded four times, and damaged at the bottom, from Phanagoria, c.530–510 bc.

Vinogradov 1998: 160–3 (with photograph and facsimile; SEG 48, 1024); Dana 2007: 87–8; Bravo 2007: 55; cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E11.

‘Ο παῖς : οὗτος | ἐ Βορυσθενέος | ἐπρήθη : ὄνομα : | αὐτῶι :
 Φαύλλης, | πάντα : θέλωμεν : | [- - ἀπο]δ[όσ]θαι

2: ἐ=ἐξ ed. pr.; ἐ=ἐγ?; ἐ=ἐμ Dana (genitive locative). Borysthene: Berezan or Olbia, ed. pr. || 4: the slave has a Greek name; he either was enslaved in Olbia's hinterland, or was a *threptos* in an Olbian house, ed. pr. || 5–6: [χρῆ? ἀπο]δ[όσ]θαι. ‘we wish (all debts?) to be paid’ ed. pr., who proposes to restore χρῆ

for *χρέα* and suggests that the buyer from Phanagoria had paid a deposit and that he was now requested to pay the entire sum.

This slave here was sold out of Borysthene, his name is Phaylles. We wish all (debts?) to be paid.

5. Private letter on a rectangular sheet of lead (15.8 × 8.5 cm) probably folded three times over, from Olbia, c.500 BC (mentioned in Vinogradov 1981: 19; Vinogradov 1998: 157; Wilson 1997–8: 38–40; SEG 48, 1012).

Dana 2004: 1–14, on the basis of a facsimile (*BE* 2005, no. 366; *SEG* 54, 694); Santiago Álvarez and Gardēñes Santiago 2006; Dana 2007: 75–6 (with facsimile); Bravo 2011 (and *BE* 2012 no. 306). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E5.

Outside: Ἀπατόριος
Λεάνακτι

- Inside:* Λήνακτι Ἀπατόριος· τὰ χρήματα σισύλγημαι ὑπ' Ἡρακ-
λείδεω τῷ Ε[δ]θήριος· κατὰ δύναμιν τὴν σὴν· μὴ ἀπολέ-
σω τὰ χρήματα· τὰ γὰρ χρ[ήμ]ατα σὰ ἐφάμην εἶναι· καὶ Μένω-
ν· ἔφατό· σε ἐπ[ι]θέναι ἐωνυγῶι· καὶ τ[ᾱ] <λ>α ὅσα σὺ αὐτῶι ἐπέ-
θηκας καὶ π[ρὸ]ς ἔφατο {σ} ἐμοὶ σὰ τὰ χρήματα ἐνὴν· ἵαν ἐπιθε-
ίης διφθέρια π[ρὸς] Ἡρακλείδην καὶ Θαθαίην· τὰ χρήματα σ-
έο Υἱὲ δ' ὀπ[ρ]όσσο, ἀποδ[ί]δ' ὅσε· κένοι γὰρ φασιν· ὅ τι σὸν ἐχόσων ἀποδώ-
[σεν] τὸ· συλλ[η]θ[έν] ὄλ[ον] ἐπτά καὶ εἴκοσιν στατήρες. *vacat*
[τί? θε]λήσῃς; περὶ τῶν οἰκητέων Θυμώλεω (*sic*)
10 (- - c.10–11 - - Εδ[?]θυμῶι· αὐτῶι μοι οὐκ οἶδα ᾗν {ε} γένηται εἶο
Vacat.

6: the name could be masculine (from Thathaies, as Wilson 1997–8) or feminine (Thathaie, as Dana 2004 and Eidinow and Taylor 2010). || 7: *SEG* 54, 694 ('a verb in the future, third person singular, followed by the Ionic κείνοι is probable, but ὡς ὀπ[ρ]όσσο] is problematic; the reading of an omega on Vinogradov's drawing is not certain, and one would expect ἀφ' ὀδ' ὀπ[ρ]όσσο, Avram); ὀπ[ρ]ό[σα? c.4]ος· ἐκείνοι Dana; ὡς ὀπ[ρ]ό[σο, ἀποδ]ίδ' ὅσε· κείνοι Santiago Álvarez and Gardēñes Santiago (cf. *SEG* 37, 838 l. 13: ὀκόσσο; a genitive of value) || 8–9: a line marking the end of the text was traced, possibly for the purpose of cutting the lead (Dana 2004); but more text was then added.

Apatorios to Leanax.

To Leanax, Apatorios. I have had the goods confiscated by Herakleides, son of Eotheris; by your influence I will not lose the goods. For I said the goods were yours, and Menon said that you had entrusted to him also the other things that you have entrusted to him, and he added that the goods that I had were yours. If you would send the records to Herakleides and Thathaie(s), how much(?) your goods(?) . . . for they say they will hand over what they have of yours. The total of goods seized is twenty-seven staters. What will you decide? Concerning the domestic slaves of Thymoleos . . . to Eothymios; as to myself, I do not know if it is going to end well.

The situation is similar to that described in no. 1. Particularly interesting here is the mention of *διφθέρια*, a document written on leather (here, 'records'). The accusative 'Thathaie' has given rise to speculations: it is a 'Lallname' similar to the one attested, certainly for a woman, in Cumae (*Ταταίη*, *SEG* 47, 1475). If this is a woman, she might be the wife of Herakleides; at any rate, she would seem to have a fairly important role (a woman, the wife/mother, was mentioned also in no. 1, but her position was different, as she seemed to depend on Protagoras). However, as *Θαθαίην* can be the accusative of a male name, it may be preferable to see here a male associate of the opponent (so Wilson 1997–8; Chaniotis, in *SEG* 54, 694).

6. Private letter on a ceramic fragment (amphora or oenochoe, dimensions 6.7 × 9.5 cm) of Fikellura style from Olbia, c.500 BC.

Rusjaeva and Vinogradov 1991: 201–2, with date to c.550–525 BC (with photograph and facsimile; cf. SEG 42, 710); Dubois 1996, no. 24, with date to c.400 BC (facsimile); Dettori 1999: 283–5 (with date *ante* 500 BC); Bravo 2000–1: 162–4 (cf. EBGR 2001, no. 26); Bravo 2001: 253–64 (SEG 51, 970). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E12.

- [- - - c.9 - - τῶι ἀγω]νοθέτῃ μέλι καὶ κριὸ[v - - c.11 - - -]
 [- - - c.14 - - - ν]ὺν ὡς ἐπιτέλλεις πέμπ[ω - - c.9 - - -]
 [- - c.10 - - - παντ]ὸς τόπους θεοποιήτους περιε[- - c.9 - -]
 [- c.9 - - - διὰ γὰρ ἄκρην λίγην <ν> καμὲ Ἰρόφως νησ[τεῖν καί]
 5 [- - - c.13 - -] δικαίως. ἐν τῇ Χαλκίῃ αἱ γυν[ναῖκές εἰσι]
 [ἐν ταραχῇ πολ]λῇ. ἐνθεύθεν ἐς τὴν Ὑλαίην[ν διέβην]
 [- - c.12 - -] αὐτὶς οἱ βωμοὶ βεβλαμμένοι[εἰσί]
 [- - c.10 - - Μ]ητρὸς Θεῶν καὶ Βορυσθέ<νεος> καὶ Ἡρακλ[έους - -]
 [- - c.8 - μ]ετὰ τὸ ναυάγιον οἱ δούλοι καταδρα[μόντες - -]
 10 [- c.9 - - τ]ῇ ἱουρργίῃ Μητροφάνεος ἱρὸς ἐλίπετ[ο - -]
 [- c.10 - - τ]ῶν πιτύων κακαὶ τῶν δένδρων διηκόσια
 [- - c.12 - ο]ἱ θηρευταὶ τῶν ἱππων ἡνύρηκασιν μετὰ κυνῶν πολ[λῶν

1: Bravo; [-]νοθέτῃ SEG 42, 710 and Dubois || 2: [καὶ να]ὺν? and πέμπ[ειν - -] SEG 42, 710; [-]ὺν and πέμπ[ων Dubois || 3: παντ]ὸς (for πάντας) Bravo; [- - ὅπ]ως τόπους θεοποιήτους περιδ[ραμῆται] SEG 42, 710; [- - εἰ]ς and περιδ[-] Dubois; in fine περιε[πόλησα (or -πλωσα) αὐτός] with a first person, Bravo || 4: Ἰρόφως (possibly Ἰροφῶν) Bravo; perhaps Ἰροφῶ{Σ}ν ησ[-] Avram, SEG 51, 970; [καὶ παρ] ἄκρην ἄγῃ, καμὲ ἱρὸ φῶς νησ[- - καί] SEG 42, 710; [- -] PAKPHNAIHKAME ἱρῶ φῶς NHZ[- -] Dubois, who proposes at the end νήσ[ου] ('light of the sanctuary of the island?') || 5: Bravo, who proposes as the beginning of the line [πλεῖν οὐκ ἤθελε] or [πλεῖν ἀπώκησε] and considers for the end also ἦσαν instead of εἰσι; [θύωσιν?]- - Χαλκίῃ αἱ γυν[ναῖκες SEG 42, 710; no restoration before δικαίως and after γυν[ναῖκες -] in Dubois || 6: Bravo; [ὁ δέ? ἐκπ]λῇ SEG 42, Dubois || 7: [- -] αὐτὶς - - [- εἰσί - -] SEG 42, 710 and Dubois; Bravo suggests [ἐν τῷ τεμένει] αὐτὶς or [ἐν τῷ ἱρῷ ἐξ] αὐτὶς || 8: Βορυσθέ<νεος> (or <νιος>) καὶ Ἡρακλ[ῆος] SEG 42, 710; Βορυσθέ<νεος> καὶ Ἡρακλ[έος - -] Dubois || 9: [- - μ]ετα and καταδρα[μόντες -] Dubois; [- - μ]ετὰ and καταδρα[μείν] SEG 42, 710; [ἐοίκασι δέ μ]ετὰ, [φαίνονται δέ μ]ετὰ, [λέγονται δέ μ]ετὰ or [ἐλέγοντο δέ μ]ετὰ and καταδρα[ύναι] Bravo || 10: [- - χ]ειρουργίῃ SEG 42, 710; [- - τ]ε ἱουρργίῃ - - - ἔλιπε τ[- - -], Dubois; [μοῦνος δ' ἐν τ]ῇ or [μοῦνος δ' ἐπὶ τ]ῇ Bravo || 11: SEG 42, 710 and Dubois; τ[ῶν πιτύων] [κα]καὶ τῶν <ἄλλων> δένδρων διηκόσια Bravo || 12 beginning: SEG 42, 710 and Dubois; Bravo proposes to restore [κατακεκομμένα (or κατακεκαυμένα)]; end of line, Bravo; TYP A SEG 42, 710, Dubois

... I am sending to the *agonothetes* honey and a ram ... as you request ... (I have inspected?) all the places made by the gods ... because, following an excessive fasting, Hirophos was ill ... rightly so. In the Chalkie the women (are in great agitation?) ... Thence (I moved) towards Hylaie ... the altars have again been damaged ... of the Mother of the Gods and Borysthene and Herakles ... after the shipwreck the slaves have run away (?) ... (only) the sacred slave of Metrophanes was left in the religious service ... of the pines and (?) of the (?other) trees two hundred (had been damaged?) the hunters of the horses have found with many dangers ...

According to Bravo, this is an official letter, sent by an Olbian magistrate, or possibly a priest, to another, higher magistrate; the sender was probably writing from Berezan (Βορυσθενίς), while the addressee lived in Olbia. It would seem that the writer begins by detailing his next action, sending honey and a ram to an *agonothetes* (presumably in charge of organizing competitions and a sacrifice in honour of Achilles). The deictic *vûn*, the second person present *ἐπιτέλλεις* ('as you request'), and the verbal form *πέμπ[ω]* which, although fragmentary, speaks for a present tense, all point to this. Then, begins a report on events past (too little of the end of l. 3 remains, and l. 4 is restored; but ll. 6 to 12 clearly refer to events in the past). For a detailed commentary on the religious and historical aspects of this letter, see Dubois 1996: 55–63 and Bravo 2001, who both highlight a number of Herodotean parallels. The text is very lacunose, and as a result any interpretation must remain hypothetical; even so, the second person singular at l. 2 makes it virtually certain that this is a letter, and a very elaborate, lengthy one. It is all the more regrettable that beginning and end are both lost.

A further hypothesis advanced by Bravo (2000–1) is of interest here. The sherd presents lines criss-crossing it, and the letters are covered in reddish ochre; comparison with other documents show that these features may have a magical significance. In this specific instance, Bravo suggests that the letter was reused by an enemy of the writer for a curse, as a magical object representing the victim. This fits nicely with the widespread perception of the letter as very literally representing the person writing it (see ch. 1, 3 and n. 8 for the *γραφή* as the image of the correspondent).

7. Private letter on a rectangular lead sheet (3.4 × 6.7 cm) folded in two, from Zhivakov Hill (on the coast of the gulf of Odessa), found in a pit-dwelling dated to c.450–400 BC (but according to Dubois in Dana 2007, not before 400 BC).

Vinogradov 1998: 164–6, no. 4 (with photographs and facsimile; cf. *SEG* 48, 1029); Dana 2007: 76–8. Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E7.

Πρωταγόρης· ἂν ἀντιμη[χα]-
νᾶτ' ἐμοί, ἀμελέω, ἔχω περὶ σο-
ύς ὃ ἂν πάρεστι καὶ ἀνεσκέακ' ἐδ·
ἐὰν ἡ σπείσῃν ὅτι τάχους, τ[ά]-
 5 *χιο(ν) οἰχέτω παρ το<ύ>το<υ> χάρι[v]*
δὲ ἄγ' ἐν αὐτὸν ἡμερον
vacat
 [- - -]EI[- - - -]

1–2: Dubois, Dana (=ἀντιμη[χα]-| νᾶται); ἀντιμη[χα]| νᾶ τ' Vinogradov; ἀντιμη[χα]-|νᾶτε? || 3: ἀνεσκέακ' Dana; ἀνεσκε<ό>ακ' Vinogradov, *SEG* || 4: Vinogradov. ἐὰν {η} σπείσῃ{ν} Dubois, Dana. || 5: το<ύ>το<υ> ed., *TONTON* lead

Protagoras! If he is scheming against me, it will not bother me: I have at my disposal something [proof, argument, etc.] regarding your kin, and I can easily refute (or remove them). If he is really going to go to much trouble that quickly, then may he leave from here quickly, and he may be thankful that a civilized . . .

The letter opens with a direct address (a nominative used as a vocative), as in no. 1; in what follows the sender speaks in the first person, as expected (*ἐμοί, ἀμελέω, ἔχω*), but it is unclear whether he is referring to the addressee with a third person singular or whether we should read in the verb a second person plural (*ἀντιμη[χα]-|νᾶτ'*, with the meaning ‘if you people start to use your cunning against me’); the following *περὶ σοῦς*, ‘concerning your people’, is problematic in both interpretations. It may also be that the scheming person is a third party, and not the addressee. Dana (2007: 78) states: ‘texte rédigé à la troisième personne’, presumably meaning that the first person speaker (the sender) speaks of the addressee in the third person. But this is not the case: cf. *περὶ σο- | ύς* at ll. 2–3. The text as is restored currently presents an intriguingly high number of ‘persons’: a speaker in the first person singular; an implied second person singular (*σοῦς* at l. 2); a third person, or a second person plural, depending on how *ἀντιμη[χα]νατεμοι* is understood; a third person, with *οἰχέτω*. A further intriguing feature of the object is that the lead was folded, after being inscribed, first along the horizontal axis, and then along the vertical one, in such a way that the inscribed text remained on the outside (Vinogradov 1998: 164). One wonders whether this is a result of a ‘refolding’ by the addressee, after the message had been delivered and opened, or whether it was an original feature (the lead is inscribed only on one side, thus the opening line, with the personal name ‘Protagoras’, might have been meant to function as an address).

8. Private letter on an amphora fragment (dimensions: 9.5 × 7 cm), from the city of Kerkinitis, near Olbia (but the text is in Ionian dialect, and thus not necessarily written by a trader from Olbia), dated to the fifth century BC.

Solomonik 1987: 114–25 (with photograph and facsimile; *SEG* 37, 665); BE 1990, no. 566; Vinogradov 1995: 66; V. O. Anochin, in *Archeologia (Kiev)* (1998) 1, 136–42 (*non vidi*: cf. *SEG* 48, 1004), proposing a date c.400 BC; Dana 2007: 83–4 (with facsimile); Bravo 2011 (and BE 2012, no. 306).

Ἀπατόριος Νεομηνίων
τὸς ταρίχους ἐς οἶκον
συνκόμισον καὶ σφήκ' ἴσα·
καὶ σ' ἄγῃ μηδὲς ἄτερ
5 ἐμέο· καὶ τῶν βοῶν
ἀνακῶς ἔχε· καὶ ὄττις
τελή γίνωσκε
ἐς τὸ(ς) Σκύθας.

4: καὶ σ' ἄγῃ ed. pr. (= καὶ σὰ ἄγῃ μηδεὶς, 'let no-one take care of your affairs'); καὶ σάγῃ, with aphesis, Dubois in Dana, καὶ σάγῃ (καὶ ἐσάγῃ) Vinogradov 1995 ('and no-one may import without me'); Holford Strevens' understanding of the passage, 'let no-one lead you', seems to me much better || 5: γῶν ed. pr.; τῶν Pleket (*SEG* 37, 665), Dubois (*SEG*) || 6: ὄ[ττις] ed. pr.; ὄττις Dubois; ὄσσ[α] Vinogradov (sampi).

Apatorios to Neomenios: bring the dry fish home and planks of equal size (? 'bundles of salted fish', Vinogradov 1995); and let no-one lead you without me. Also take good care of the oxen and learn who pays (a tax?) to the Scythians.

9. Lead letter, broken on all sides except the right, measuring c.5.8 × 5.9 cm, from Panticapaeum, end of the fifth–beginning of the fourth century BC.

Saprykin and Fedoseev (2010a): 50–8 (in Russian; photograph and facsimile).

[- - - - -]
1 [- - -]ς ἔσχημα[ι - - - - -]
[- - -]τῇι σοράιι ὑοῦ [- - παρ' αὐ]-
[τ]οῦ ἐμένα[s] δραχμ[άς - - - -]
αὐτὸς ὑπάγω ἐς δ[- - - - -]
5 ας τε ἄς θεραπεύμα[τα - - - - -]
τέξο δεσμόν, ὅλας [- - - - -]
[τ]αλάν[των], δοῦλ[ους - - - -]
άντων ἐθ[έ]μ[ην - - - - -]
10 [τ]αλάντων[- - - - -]
[τ]αλάν[των - - - - -]
[...]μεν ἔσχημ[αι]Δ[- - - -]
[...]... τ[αλάν]των[- - - -]
[- - - - -]

3: edd. pr. propose ἐμένας, aorist participle from ἔημι, with the meaning of 'sent', agreed with the following δραχμάς; a compound form would, however, be more acceptable here. || 4: ὑπάγω ἐς δουλείαν? ἐς δίκην? edd. pr. || 6: τέξο > τέξω edd. pr. |

I am taken . . . coffin of the son . . . drachmas . . . myself I bring in (or under) . . . preparations . . . cable, wood . . . talents, slaves . . . talents . . .

The first person ὑπάγω (l. 4; cf. ἔσχημα[ι, ll. 1 and 12, τέξο? l. 6) make it clear that this is a letter. But beginning and end are lost, and the body is difficult to understand.

10. Lead letter (c.6.5 × 4.5 cm), preserved on top, right and bottom, left side missing, from Panticapaeum, c.400–350 BC.

Saprykin and Kulikov 1999: 201–6 (with photograph; cf. *SEG* 50, 704); Dana 2007: 86. Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E9.

Ἑρμαῖο[ς τῷ δεῖνι χαίρειν - -]
 πεντήκον[τα - -]
 ἐπιμελή[- - -]
 ἔστιν γὰρ [- - - -]
 5 ἀπέστειλα [- - -]
 ἔδωκα ἐφ' αἷς τ[ῇ]ν ἐπιμέ[λειαν - - - - κο]-
 μίσαι παρ' αὐτοῦ· ἔρρω[σο].

3: Dana; ἐπιμελή[θησαν ed.pr.

Hermaios (to such and such, greetings). Fifty ... take care ... for it is ... I have sent ... I have given, over which the care ... recover them from him. Farewell.

A small hole in the top left corner has been interpreted as implying that the tablet was nailed to a wooden support; this is slightly surprising, as the information contained in the text does not seem to warrant display. The hole might have preceded the incision of the text: while lines 2 to 7 begin very regularly one under the other, the first letter of the first line is slightly indented, as if to accommodate the hole.

11. Private letter on an amphora fragment of triangular shape (max. dimensions 6 × 2.5 cm) from Kozyrka (*chora* of Olbia), second half of the fourth century BC (350–325, on the basis of the archaeological context).

Vinogradov and Golovačeva 1990: 15–30 (= Vinogradov 1997: 323–35, with photograph; cf. SEG 42, 711; Dubois 1996, 49 n. 1); Dana 2007: 79–81 (with photograph).

[Νι]κοφάνας Ἀδράστον | Ζωπυρίωνι ἴππο- | ν ἔδωκεν· ἀπο- | στείλάτω μοι | εἰς πόλιν | καὶ
 δότω | [αὐ]τῷ τὰ γράμ-
 verso ματα.

Nikophanas son of Adrastus gave Zopyrion a horse; let him send (it) to me in the city, and give him the document.

Vinogradov has proposed to see in Zopyrion the general of Alexander who unsuccessfully besieged Olbia in 331/330 BC—but the name is a fairly common one, and this is most likely a private affair.

This has been interpreted as a letter; but it makes more sense to think that the document registers the change in ownership of the horse, and that it is meant to be handed back in exchange of the horse.

12. Private letter on an opisthographic lead sheet (13 × 3 cm), folded vertically in the middle, from Olbia (or Berezan? Jordan 2000: 91). Fourth century BC.

B. B. Latychev, *Izvestiya Arkheologicheskoi Komissii* 1904: 10–13 (*non vidi*); Wilhelm 1909: 118–26 (with photograph) (= Wilhelm 1984: 338–46; Syll.³ 1260); Dubois 1996, no. 25 (with facsimile; date to 350 BC). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E2.

side a: Ἀρτικῶν· τοῖς ἐν οἴκω<ι>
 χαίρειν· ἦν ἐγβάλει· ἐκ τῆς
 οἰκίης ὑ:μ[ᾱς] Μυλλίων·
 παρὰ Ἀτακούς, [εἰ]ς τὸ οἴκημα,
 side b: ἦν γὰρ διδῶν· εἰ δέ μῃ,
 παρὰ Ἀγάθαρκον· εἰς τὰ
 παρὰ Κέρδω[ν]ος ἐρίων
 τὸ μέρος κομισάσθω.

Artikon to those at home, greetings. If Myllion ejects you from the house, go to Atakes, to the room there, if indeed he gives it (to you). But if not, go to Agatharkos. As for what we get from Kerdon, let him take his(?) part of the wool.

13. 'Letter' (?) on a triangular ceramic fragment from Gorgippia (Bosphoros), 350–325 BC.

Vinogradov 1997b: 232–44 (with photograph; cf. *SEG* 47, 1175); Dana 2007: 89–90 (with photograph). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E14.

Ἀπολλωνε[- - - - -]
 πέλεκος ΦΥ.[- - - -]
 δὸς τῶι πα(ί)δ[- - -].
 ο κηπῶρός, δκ[ότ?]
 5 οὔκωι ἦλθεν ἀν[εῖ-?]
 τ' οἶα σταφυλῇ
 καὶ λάχανα.

1: ostrakon, Dana; Ἀπολλων[ί]δ[ης] ὥι ? Vinogradov || 2: φυτ[οργῶ ? Vinogradov || 3 ΠΑΔΙ ostrakon; πα(ι)δ[ί]ωι or πα(ι)δ[ίσκωι] Vinogradov; πα(ι)δ[ί]ωι Dana || 4: the scribe initially had written ΟΠ (probably for the *koine* form ὀπότε), which he then corrected to Ionian ὀκότε, Vinogradov, Dana. || 5: the λ in ἦλθεν has been inserted above the other letters. || 5–6: Dana (who comments on the psilosis here) ; ἀν[εῖ]τ' οἶα Vinogradov.

Apollon-[] give the axe to the slave. The gardener, when he came to the house, wine grapes and vegetables had ripened (?).

14. Two joining fragments of a lead sheet (8.2 × 4.1 × 0.1 cm) found in a house in Olbia in 2010, in an archaeological context of fifth or fourth century BC.

V. V. Nazarčuk, 'Un nouveau fragment d'inscription sur lamelle de plomb d'Olbia' (in Russian), in *The Phenomenon of the Bosporan Kingdom: Population, languages, Contacts*, St. Petersburg 2011, 471–4 (drawing and bad photograph); cf. Avram, *BE* 2012, no. 310.

... NPΔ	A(?)PHM(?)...
ΥΙ ΠΞΟΥΙ	KAITO...
AITHΣMHTPO	HI HNΠEN....
EKTAΣIΔEMH	AYT ΠOHM(?)....
5 ΕΣΣΙΤΟΝΟΙΚΟΝΕΥΝ....	
TA	

As Avram points out, none of this makes much sense, with the possible exception of the fifth line, [- -]εσσι τὸν οἶκον ξὺν [-], which orients the interpretation towards a letter. An intriguing feature is that the text seems to have been inscribed within a frame.

15. Fragment of right side of ceramic sherd (dimensions 7 × 7 cm.) from the agora of Olbia, third century BC.

Shebalin 1968: 296–9 (*non vidi*); Dubois 1996, no. 26 (with facsimile; cf. *SEG* 46, 943). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E15.

[- - - - - τ]οῖς ναοκλήρ-
 [οῖς - - - τ]οῖς πρὸ ἡμῶν ν-
 [- - - - ἦ]ν μὴ ἀποδῶτε
 [- - - - M]ενάνδρου ἐχό-
 [μενα - - - -] α[. .]

Dubois. l. 4: [τὰ τοῦ (or τὰ ὑπὸ) M]ενάνδρου ἐχό||[μενα? ed. pr., *SEG*]

To the *naukleroi*...those before us...if you do not give back...what is held by Menander(?)

The first person plural pronoun ἡμῶν ('before us') certifies that this is a letter: Dubois 1996: 66.

16. Unpublished 'letter' on a rolled-up sheet of lead, from the cemetery of Olbia.

Mentioned in Vinogradov 1998: 154 n. 4, no. 3; Dana 2007: 81–2; cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E6.

Dana dates the document to fourth–third century BC, and considers it a letter, sent by one Batikon (*Βατίκων*) to one Diphilos (*Διφίλο*); the sender would be writing about difficulties that he and his family had had in a trial. Bravo 1987: 206 suggests that the lead sheet should be seen as a magic text, because of its provenance from a tomb; it is a letter sent by Batikon to a dead man, Diphilos, who should use his power on the sender's behalf.

17. 'Letter' (?) on a ceramic sherd (an amphora fragment, 6.5 × 8.5 cm) from Panskoje I in the Chersonesos, dated to c.350 BC.

Stolba 2005: 76–87 (with photograph and facsimile; cf. *SEG* 55, 859). Cf. Dana 2007: 82–3.

[- - -]ΑΣΟΚΕΠΕ
[- - -]ΙΝΟΚΕΔΙΔΟ
[- - -]Ρ ΚΟΤΥΤΙΩΝΟΣ
[- - -]ΡΑΙΣ ΕΠΙΘΕ-
5 [- - -]ΥΔΑΡΙΟΝ

1–3: [acc. plur. fem.]*as* ὁκ ἔπε- | [*μψα*–?πρ]ἰν ὁκ ἐδίδο/[*υν* - -ύπε]ρ ed.pr.; but it would be possible to read ὁκ for doric ὁκα also in the first line, or conversely ὁκ for οὐκ in the second || 4–5: [*ταῖς Μοί*]ραῖς ἐπίθε- | [*ς ἐπὶ ψε*]υδάριον ed.pr.; perhaps [τὸ πα]ιδάριον, Avram in *SEG*).

The editor, on the basis of rather adventurous restorations, suggests that the text concerns the making of sacrifices in the local cemetery. In that case, 'letter' might not be the right designation for this document (but it is difficult to see what else it could be; it might be better to dismiss the sacrifices). A further peculiarity is that this is the first document in Doric dialect from the region. Dana 2007: 82–3, who does not attempt to propose a text or an interpretation, concurs in considering it a letter.

18. Letter on a rolled lead plate found on the seashore near the ancient city of Hermonassa, and now sold to unknown person; the publications are based on a photograph. Dated by the editors on the basis of the letter-forms to the end of the fifth–beginning of the fourth century BC. The lead (dimensions: c.3.2 × 20.4 × 0.15 cm.) had been divided in two; the writer began writing on the left half, and when this was full moved to the right half.

N. A. Pavlichenko, S.V. Kashayev, 'Novaya epigraficheskaya nakhodka iz Germonassy', *Drevnosti Bospora* 16 (2012) 288–99 (*non vidi*); S. Yu. Saprykin, A. V. Belousov, 'Pis'mo Kledika iz Germonassy', *Drevnosti Bospora* 15 (2012), 348–59 (*non vidi*); Belousov and Saprykin 2013: 153–60 (with photograph).

Col. I Ἵριστόκρατες : ἐπιστέλλε τοι Κλεῖδικος : πυνθάνομᾶ γάρ Μανδρόχαριν : τὰ ἐνθαντὸ έόντα : διαιτᾶν : κακῶς> 5 ἐλθὼν : παρὰ Σωκράτεια ἐς τὰ οἶκ[- - - - -]	Col. II συνλέξαντες : τὰ λελιθμένα ἐς μίαν στέγην : κατασφρακίσασα
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Text: Belousov and Saprykin 2013. I 3: Pavlichenko; *Μάνδρῳ χάριν* Belousov and Saprykin. || 4 *διαιτᾶν* Pavlichenko; *δαίταν* Belousov and Saprykin. *κακῶν* Pavlichenko, Belousov and Saprykin, lead. || 6: ἐς τὰ οἰκᾶμῃτ' ἀπολωλότα Belousov and Saprykin (for οἰκήματα); ἐς τὰ οἶκ[*ία* λαβέ e.g. - - Pavlichenko. II 1: *λελιθ(ω)μένα* Belousov and Saprykin.

O Aristokrates! Kledikos sends to you. For I learn that Mandrocharis administers what is there badly. Going to Socrates, to the ruined buildings, collect what has been left and seal it in one room.

The letter opens with a vocative, a feature that finds parallels in other letters (cf. nos. 1, 7, 31, 35, and 37, as well as possibly 13 and 25); the writer then presents himself in the third person, again in a movement that finds parallels in numerous other early letters (note moreover the use of *ἐπιστέλλω*, which finds a close parallel in no. 1 above). This is followed by an enunciative shift to the first person; there is no greeting formula.

19. Letter on a rolled up, damaged lead sheet from Hermonassa, containing on the outside c.12 lines of Greek letters.

Unpublished; preliminary discussions in Finogenova 2003 and Dana 2007; see also Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E10. Finogenova 2003: 1019 reads only the word *γυνή*; photographs at p. 1044, fig. 9. Dana 2007: 86–7 disputes the reading *γυνή* on the basis of the photograph; she recognizes letters of different sizes, but cannot offer a transcription.

20. Letter on ceramic sherd, broken into two joining pieces found at different times during the excavations of a house, from Nikonion, in the region of Odessa, Ukraine, now in the archaeological museum of Odessa. The letter is dated, also on the basis of the archaeological evidence, to the second half of the fourth–first half of the third century BC. Dimensions of the two sherds: 9.8 × 10.5 and 9.4 × 7.5 cm.

Awianowicz 2009: 196–8 (A. Avram, in BE 2009, no. 360) and Awianowicz 2011: 237–9 (for the second fragment, and a text of the whole).

- Διονύσιος τοῖς ἐν οἴκῳ[ι] χαίρειν. ἕως τούτου ἔρ<ρω>μαι καὶ
ὁ υἱός. ὑμεῖς δὲ μαλακία[ι] μὴθέν ἐνδῶτε, ἀλλὰ ἀποσ-
τελόν τινα καὶ ἔντειλαι μαρακατῇ τὸ μονόξ-
υλον ἄμμου ἐνέπλησα. ἐξεράσας μετέωρον
5 αὐτὸ ἀνασπασάτω, ὥς πλήν ἐκείνου ἐλπίς
οὐδεμία ἐστίν. καὶ κριθῶν εἰσιν παρὰ Ποσσικρ[ά]-
την μέδιμνοι ἐννέα. ἔρρωται δὲ καὶ
Ποσσικράτης. {ι} κ[ό]μισαι δὲ παρὰ τῶν
Θοαψων ἡμι[σ]τήρηρον ἀποδοῦ-
10 τὸ εἰμάτ[ιον.] σα

Text: Awianowicz 2011. 3: Awianowicz 2011. *παρακατῇ* Awianowicz 2009; *παρὰ Κατῇ* or *παρ' Ἀκάτῃ* Avram (names); possibly a term linked to *ἀκάτιον*, light boat?

Dionysios sends his greetings to those at home. Until now I am in good health, and so the son too. You should in no way give in to weakness, but dispatch someone and instruct Marakates (?), (that) I have loaded the light boat with sand. After emptying it out, he should haul it up, for apart from this there is no hope at all. And there are nine medimni of barley with Possikrates. Possikrates too is in good health. And get from the Thoapsoi(?) a half stater, after returning the cloth.

As Awianowicz 2011 notes, Dionysios begins by greeting the members of his household, but from ll. 2–3 onwards he switches to a singular, which must refer to a woman, as shown by l. 9. The letter gives practical instructions, of a commercial nature (the sand may have been a commodity, unless it served the purpose of preventing the boat from being carried away).

The mention of Possikrates attracts information on the health of the latter (l. 7, *ἔρρωται*); then, the letter goes back to business matters; there are no final greetings. Remarkably, the verb used at the beginning of the letter (if the restoration is correct) for the purpose of indicating the good health of the writer and the son, as well as later, at l. 7, for Possikrates, again to convey his good health, is a form of *ῥώννυμι*, the verb usually employed in the final valediction ('farewell', *ἔρρωσο*), while for information concerning one's own health one tends to find forms of *ὑγιαίνω*.

21. Letter on a squarish fragment of amphora from Sinope (dimensions: $6 \times 5.5 \times 0.4/0.6$ cm), found during excavations in the northern part of the Chersonesus Taurica, dated by the editor to 375–325 bc.

I.A. Makarov, 'A Greek Letter Found in Chersonesus Taurica and the Interpretation of the Term $\Sigma\Lambda\sigma\theta\eta\pi$ (IOSPE I² 401)', *VDI* 2009/2, 49–61 (photograph); cf. *BE* 2010, 462.

Τιμοσθένη
χαίρειν τὸν
σθύνλακον
λύσον καὶ λα-
5 βὲ τὸ ἐαργύρι
ἐκ τῷ θυλάκο
.. Α . Η

The editor considers *σθύνλακον* here = *θύλακον*; he proposes: 'To Timosthenes, greetings. Open the bag and take the money from the bag ...'.

22. Letter from Nymphaion (now in the Hermitage).

Unpublished. Mentioned by Vinogradov 1998: 154 n. 4, no. 9 (cf. also Dana 2007: 85; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E8).

Gulf of Massilia

23. Private letter on a rectangular sheet of lead (dimensions: $9.5 \times 14.2 \times 0.1$ cm) found rolled up during the excavation of a building in Emporion, c.500 bc.

Sanmarti and Santiago 1987: 119–27 (photograph and facsimile; cf. *SEG* 37, 838); Sanmarti and Santiago 1988a: 100–2; Sanmarti and Santiago 1988b: 3–17; Jeffery 1990: 78, no. 3; Santiago 1990a, 79–80; Slings 1994: 111–17; van Effenterre and Ruzé 1994–5: ii, 268–71, no. 74; de Hoz 1997, no. 2. 14; Rodríguez Somolinos 1998, no. 1; Santiago 2003: 167–71 (*SEG* 53, 1153). Cf. Wilson 1997–8: 46–8; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, D2.

[- -]ως ἐν Σαιγάνθῃ ἔσῃ, κἄν[- - -]
[- -] Ἐμμπορίταισιν οὐδ' ἐπιβα[- - -]
[- -]νεῖς ἢ ἔκοσι κοῖνος οὐκ ἐλα[- -]δ[- -]
[- ἐν Σαιγ]άνθῃ ὀνωνῆσθαι Βασπεδ[...]π[- - -]
5 [- -] ἀν ἄρσαν παρακομίσεν κἄς [...] ἐν [- -]φ[-]
[- -]λ. εἰσιν τί τούτων ποητέον [...]π[- -]
[- -]τα καὶ κελεύε σέ Βασπεδ[...] ἐλκ[εν - -]
[- -]σθαι [εἶ] τις ἔσται ὃς ἐλξει ἐς Δ[- -]οστ[- -]
[- -]ῆ] μέτερον κἂν δύο ὠῖσι, δύο πρ[οέσ]θ[ω - - -]
10 [- -]λος δ' ἔστω κἂν αὐτὸς θέλ[η] [...]θαι[- - -]
[- -]τῶ] μυσιν μετεχέτω. κἄμ μὴ ὁ[- - - -]
[- -]άτω κάπιστελάτω ὁκόσο ἂν[- -]
[- -]ν ὥς ἂν δύνῃται τάχιστα[- - -]
[- -]κεκ]έλευκα. χαίρε.

1: [- -]δ[ικ]ως Sanmarti and Santiago 1987 || 2: ἐπιβα[- - -] Slings; ἐπιβα[ίνης] Santiago 1990a, de Hoz, ἐπιβά[ταισιν] Sanmarti and Santiago 1987 || 3: πλέο]νεῖς van Effenterre–Ruzé || 6: Santiago 2003; α.εἰσιν van Effenterre–Ruzé || 7: κελεύε Sanmarti and Santiago 1987, Slings; ἐρώτα καὶ κέλευε Sanmarti and Santiago 1988a || 11: ὁ[μω]λ[όγη] Santiago 1990a; van Effenterre–Ruzé || 12: μενά]τω Sanmarti and Santiago 1988a, van Effenterre–Ruzé

When (?) you are in Saiganthe and if... with/for the Emporitai, do not embark [...] (not less than ?) twenty, and wine (?) not less than... in Saiganthe, that Basped- may buy a ship... anchor to transport... what of this should be done... and he tells you... Basped-... if there is someone who will tow until... ours. And if they are two, that he foresees

two... but that it (he) may be...; and if he wants... that he may share for a half. And if not... and that he may send instruction of how much he would... as rapidly as can be. These are my instructions. Greetings.

24. Private fragmentary letter on a rectangular sheet of lead (dimensions $6.3 \times 4 \times 0.1$ cm) found during excavations along the inner side of the Greek wall at Emporion, episthographic, end of the fifth century BC.

Sanmarti and Santiago 1989: 36–8 (photograph and facsimile; cf. *SEG* 39, 1088); Santiago 1990*b* (cf. Slings 1994: 111–17); de Hoz 1997: 41–2, no 2. 15; Rodríguez Somolinos 1998, no. 8. Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, D1.

- A [- -] *AI* [- -]
 [- -] *δῖς* [τ] *όσσον* - -]
 [- -] *ών* [ησ] *θ[ε- -]*
 [- -] *ον* *όν* *ήσ* [αι - -]
 5 [- -] *ήν* *τις* [- -]
 [- -] *αὐτῶι* *δ[έ- -]*
 [- -] *οὐ* [[η]] *κ* *ῆδ* *υ* [- -]
 [- -] *vos* *ές* *Α* [- - -]
 [- -] *επρη* *ξ* *ε* *κείνο* [- - -]
 10 [- - -] *ἄλλοι* *καί* *Ὅ* [- - -]
 B [- -] *ATIEΛAP* [- -]
 [- -] *ΑΣ* [.] *ΑΣΑ* [- -]
 [- -] *ἄνδρα* *να* [*ύκληρον*]

A. 2: Santiago 1990*b*, de Hoz || 3: Santiago 1990*b*, de Hoz; -] *ωβ* [-.] *θ* [—] edd. pr. || 4: Santiago 1990*b*, de Hoz; -] *ον* *νησ* [- a form of *όν* *ήσ* *ιμος*? edd. pr. || 5: edd. pr. - -] *ήν* *τις* [*θ* *έ* *λη* *ι* Santiago 1990*b*, De Hoz || 7: Santiago 1990*b*; *οὐ* [[η]] *κ* *ῆδ* *υ* [*νάμην*?] edd. pr. || 8: *οἱ* *vos* *ές* *Α* [edd. pr.;] *vos* *ές* *Α* [- -] *ῆ* *λ* *θ* *ε*, Santiago 1990*b* || B. 1 [- -] *παρ* *ἂ* *Τι* *ε* *λαρ* [- -] Santiago 1990 ||

A. ... twice as much ... you may have earned ... to be advantageous ... if someone ... but to him ... not ... he managed ... others and O- ... B. ... a shipowner and merchant

- A. While this clearly has to do with buying and trade, and while the involvement of ‘others’ at the end is certain, the text is too fragmentary to allow any serious discussion.
 B. This may have contained the address, possibly introduced by *παρά*, if we see in Tielar– a name (Etruscan?); but again, too little is left to allow solid conjectures.

25. Letter on clay tablet, dated c.500 BC, written in Attic dialect but found in the gulf of Roses, between Ampurias and la Escala, now lost; boustrophedon.

Dunst 1969: 146–54 (with photograph); Johnston in Jeffery 1990: 464 n. A, who remarks: ‘possibly ancient text, known only from a bad copy with a most unusual alphabet’; de Hoz 1997, no. 2. 56; Rodríguez Somolinos 1998, no. 4.

- Χαίρε* *Ἐνεργος* *ἀδελφός*
ἐν *Ἐμπυλίῳ* *οὐκ ἰδ-*
ίου *π* *η* *λοῦ* *δεῖ* *εἶτε* *ᾱ* < *σ* > *β-*
όλου *-* *ἀλλά* *γάρ* *χρη* < *σ* > *τᾱ*
 5 *κέ* *καυκα* *ἀ* *λεί* < *φ* > *ειν*, < *ῶ* > *στε* *Α*
καὶ *τῷ* *χαλκῷ* *ἀργυ-*
ρο *ΑΠ* [c.5] *ΥΟΙ* *τῶν* *κε-*
ράμων *μέτρου* *ΜΙ*
ἄκνυναι *τὸ* *πέττειν* *ἐν*
 10 *τῷ* *νόμῳ* *Π* *·ΕΠΙΕΙ* *διὰ* *τοῦς*
Τυρρηγόνους *ἱπνούς* *ὁ*

- τοῦ κυβερνήτου φίλος,
 Τιβεκος, φέρων τὴν ἐπιστο-
 λὴν ΕΡΕΙΙΤΕΝ τὴν ἀρχὴν
 15 ἐν τῇ{ν} ἀποικίᾳ· οἱ διά-
 φοροὶ γλαυκοὶ κρατε-
 ροὶ καὶ αἱ μέλαιναὶ ΚΑΑ

Greeting, Energos brother in Empylon. There is no need of a particular clay or soot; for I have cooked some excellent (vases) to paint over, in the same way as with bronze in silver (is done). The cooking of the vases in the usual way (?) broke a number of... Ask about Etruscan ovens; the friend of the pilot of the ship, Tibekos, bringing the letter... authority in the colony; the excellent green strong ones (or: the excellent green are strong) and the black...

26. Fragmentary private letter on on a tightly rolled-up thin rectangular lead sheet (dimensions 17.3 × 15.5 cm), from Emporion, end of the fifth century BC.

Almagro Basch 1952: 33–5, no. 21 (photograph, facsimile; cf. *BE* 1955, no. 282); Jeffery 1990: 287; Jordan 1985: 183–4, no. 134 (*SEG* 35, 1071); de Hoz 1997: 42–3, no. 2. 16 = Rodríguez Somolinos 1998, no. 5, whose text I follow (Eidinow and Taylor 2010, D3 must refer to this letter).

- [- -] και [- -] μη [- -]
 [- -] ξει ὑμέων τη [- -]
 [- κα] ἰ Πυθαγόρ[η]ς ἐ[- -]
 [- -] Ἀγαθοκλῆ[ς] με[- -]
 5 [- οὐδ] ἐνός νύ μοι τὴν [- -]
 [- ὄ] κο ἐσκατοικίσαι [- -]
 [- -] νόμος ὑμέας του [- -]
 [- -] μεθα καὶ τῆς γρ[αφῆς -]

J. and L. Robert, *BE* 1955, no. 282, advanced the hypothesis that the text might be a letter, private or public; Jeffery 1990 and Jordan 1985, no 134, prefer to see in it a curse. Because of the presence of a verbal form in the first person plural and of pronouns in the second person plural, a letter seems more likely (so de Hoz 1997: ‘una carta publica o privada’).

27. Lead letter (?) dated to the third century BC (?), found under the church of Santa Maria at Roses (Rhode) and destroyed during the Spanish civil war. Eight lines of extremely fragmentary text.

Oikonomides 1983: 107–9 (edited from a photograph published in M. Oliva Prat, *Arquitectura Romanica Ampurdanesa: Santa Maria de Roses* (Gerona, 1973), 12), cf. *SEG* 33, 841; de Hoz 1997: 32–3, no 1. 1.

- [- - -] νις | [- - -]. ANYΔ | [- - -]. AK? | [- - -] AETE[?] || [- - -] YNΔE | [- - -].
 ΚΑΠΟ[?] | [- - -]. ΓΕ?NN? | [- - -] χει

Text: de Hoz. 2: μαῖα Oikonomides || 3: ἐ]μέ τ[Oikonomides || 4: ἐ]λεξε Oikonomides || 5: σ]υνδε-
 Oikonomides || 8 ἐντύ]χει Oikonomides

Oikonomides based his restorations (‘fanciful’: *SEG* 33, 841) on the assumption that this was a letter. The only element that might speak for it is the possibility of recognizing a greeting at the end, ἐντύ]χει, ‘farewell’.

28. Letter on a lead sheet folded in two, found in 2005 at Lattes (Hérault), ancient Lattara, in the refill of the floor of a building constructed in c.430 and destroyed in c.415 BC. Opisthographic; dimensions c.5.5 × 5.6 cm. Inscribed ‘quasi stoichedon’ by the same hand in regular letters, and dated to the first half of the fifth century BC (and at any rate before 430 BC).

Bats, in Py 2009: 303–5 (photographs and transcription); Bats 2010: 749–56 (photographs); Bats 2011: 202–4; cf. Decourt, *BE* 2012 no. 512. I am grateful to M. Dana for pointing out the existence of this document; I give the text offered by Bats.

- A. ὦ Ζήν εγ[- - -]
 σις πλεο[- - Κλ-]
 εοσθένη[- - - -]
 σον στατ[ήρα - -]
 5 ὦ Ζήν πλεα[- -]
 ἐξ[-]αι ογδ[ο - -]
 Κλεάνακτα[- -]
 σσον στατῇ[ρα - -]
 ΤΩΠΕΛΑΙΟΝ[- -]
 B. ἀπαιτῆσαι
 κείθι γαρ-
 λάην δύο ὀκ-
 τάνα

A 4: an adjectival form linked to the following στατ[ήρα, such as δισσόν or τρισσόν, Bats; ending of an imperative aorist? So also 8.

A.: O Zeus! ... more ... (K)leosthenes ... a stater ... O Zeus! six and one eighth (?) ... Kleanax ... stater ... for the oil ... B.: Demand back from there *garelaion* (? garos with olives, Bats), two octana (? a measure, Bats)

About one half of the length of text on A is missing, and this renders attempts at restoration problematic. The side A presents a regular pattern of repetition (the sequence ΩΖΗΝ, personal names in the accusative, reference to a stater); the sequence of letters ΩΖΗΝ is difficult to explain otherwise than as an invocation to Zeus (see Michel Bats' commentary). Both sides of the lead concern transactions having to do with olive oil; but the repeated invocation (if that is what ΩΖΗΝ is) and the lack of verbal forms comparable to ἀπαιτῆσαι on B (if the two -σον at l. 4 and 8 are not to be considered as aorist imperatives) may mean, as suggested by Bats, that A is an order for payment, while B is a further request.

29. Private letter on a rectangular rolled up lead sheet (c. 18.2 × c. 2.7 cm.) inscribed on both sides (and never opened), found in the harbour of Marseilles, third century BC.

(Hesnard 1999: 44); Decourt 2004, no. 4 (*BE* 2000, no. 751; *SEG* 54, 983).

- A Λεύκωνι
 B Μεγιστῆς Λεύκωνι χαίρειν· εἰ ὑγιαίνεις, καλῶς ποεῖς·
 ὑγιαίνομεν δὲ κ[α]ὶ ἡμεῖς. Οὐλῖς μοι ἐνέτυχεν ὑπὲρ τῆς
 ἀγκύρης ἀξιών ζῆτεῖν ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου ὅπως ἂν λυθῇ·
 ὁ χρόνος· ἔστω ὁ Ἀπατουριών· καὶ αὐτὸς ἔφη προστ[.] ICE[.1-2] CA
 Α Τ Ι Α (?) ΕΙΓΕΙΝ ΓΡ[. . .] ΑΤΑΛΓ[.] Τ[.] Τ[.1-2] Ι[- -]· εὐτύχει

To Leukon.

Megistes to Leukon, greetings. If you are in good health, you do well; we are in good health as well. Oulis has contacted me, asking, concerning the anchor, to try in any way to leave. The moment: let it be Apatourion. And he himself said ... Farewell.

30. Opisthographic lead sheet from Agde, broken in seven fragments (dimensions of the whole c.8.5 × 4.5 cm), of which three could be joined; dated to the fourth century BC. Now lost.

BE 1955, no. 282; BE 1956, no. 357; Lejeune 1960: 62 (BE 1961, no. 844); Decourt 1993: 134, no. 13; Decourt 2004, no. 130 (photograph and facsimile). Eidinow and Taylor 2010, C1 mention this letter, but do not take into account Decourt's publication.

side A: 1. καὶ l. 2. αγαθη and possibly αὐτὸν πρῶτον l. 4 σκυτεύς l. 5 χαίρειν καὶ ὕ-
l. 6 α τοιγαρτο-

side B: only a few groups of letters can be recognized: του, οὐκ. Decourt was not able to confirm Lejeune's readings χαρίεσσα and πρήξω.

31. Private letter on a ceramic sherd, from Olbia in the Var (southern France), close to Hyères, dated to third or second century BC.

Coupry 1968: 244; Coupry 1971: 141 (BE 1971, 728); Koumanoudis 1986: 158–9 (SEG 36, 949); Decourt 2004, no. 71. Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E13.

Εὐτύχη | ἀποστελῶ σοι | ἐπιστολὴν | περὶ τῶν | σωματίων

Eutyches, I will send you a letter concerning the slaves.

Sicily

32. Opisthographic lead sheet (8.5 × 5 cm.) folded in two lengthwise, from Himera (Sicily), c.470–450 BC. The characters on A (outer face) and B (inner) are of similar dimensions (0.3–6 cm.), but while A is very legible, the inner face B is very damaged.

Manni Piraino 1969: 301–4; 1970: 385 (A only); 1972, 107–9 (A and B, photographs, facsimile); Dubois 1989, no. 11 (A only); Arena 1994, no. 51 (A only; pl. 15.2) (SEG 44, 753); Grotta 2008: 255–64, no. 3.

A: Εὐοπίδας híaλῃ

Διεύχῃς : λοχᾶγός

Δαίτις.

B: [- - - εὔχομ]αι ἵνα μ -

ἔ [- - - - -] ἐάοις

[. .]ξέν[ον - - - εὖ ᾗ]νεσθαι

[. .]ιδίος νός[- - - - -]

A. 1: híaλῃ Manni Piraino, Dubois, Grotta; híaλῃ Arena || 2: διεύχῃς Manni Piraino; Διεύχῃς Dubois, Arena, Grotta. ΛΟΧΑΓΟΣ Manni Piraino; Λ / λοχαγος Dubois; λοχᾶγός Arena, Grotta. || 3: ΔΑΙΤΙΣ Manni Piraino; Δαίτις Dubois, Arena, Grotta. B.: Manni Piraino. The photograph does not allow to check the readings of the B side; but Manni Piraino's own facsimile indicates nothing at the beginning of B. l.2; and ΕΞΕΙ at the beginning of B. l.3.

The text has been variously interpreted as a letter of recommendation (Manni Piraino: 'Euopidas was sent through your request: lochagos Daitis'); as a military message (with híaλῃ as an aorist passive from ἰάλλω, Dubois: 'Euopidas has been sent, and Dieuches; commander of the company, Daitis'); or as a *defixio*, later reused as a projectile (with híaλῃ as aorist active, Arena: 'Dieuches Euopidas sent; commander of the company, Daitis'). The interpretation of the whole depends on whether the text on B is considered contemporaneous and connected to that on A, as Manni Piraino does, or not. If the two texts are taken together, then the second person in B l. 2 (ἐάοις) is indeed best interpreted as part of a message, a letter: 'I ask(?) that you do not allow . . . foreigner(?)' (as Curbera 1999, 181 no. 51 points out, a second person in a *defixio* of this date is unlikely); however, the reading of part B is extremely uncertain. See further the careful discussion by Grotta 2008.

Chalkidike

33. Rectangular rolled-up lead sheet (5.2 × 15 cm.) from Torone (Chalkidike), c.350–325 BC.

Henry 1991: 65–70 (*SEG* 43, 488); Henry 2001: 765–71 (photograph and facsimile). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, B4.)

- [- -]τος Τεγέαι χαίρειν. [Ξύ]λα οὐκ ἔχω ἐν Μ[ένδῃ?]
 [ὠνε]ῖσθαι. Σὺ δὲ ἂν ἀπόστειλον ἡμῖν ἐϋ[θέως] εἰ πλο[ῖον] ἔχεις,
 [έπτ]ὰ πριάμενος εἰ ἐν δυνάτῳ ἔστιν τάλαντα [. . c.8 . .]
 [μῆ] δὲ ἐλάσ<σ>ω μηδὲν σο[ι] παρ[ε]χ[έ]τω μάλιστα μὲν [. . c.8 . .]
 5 [άπ?]άντων, εἰ δὲ μ[ῆ]. . . c.8 . .] καὶ ταῦτα ποιῶν χαρι[εἰ] ἡμῖν.
 [πέρ]ρανον δ' ὦν[ή]μ[ατα] ἐ[πτα] ἡμερών] ἢ κατακωλ[ύ]σω vac.
 [έρρ]ω[σο].

[. .]tos to Tegeas, greetings. I am unable to buy wood in M[ende?]. So you dispatch some to us immediately if you have a boat, buying seven talents if it is possible [from X]. Let him not provide you with any fewer at all, preferably [of . .]; but if not, [. .] And if you do this, you will be doing us a favour. Complete purchases within seven days or I shall put a stop (to the arrangement). Farewell(?) (Henry's translation).

34. Unpublished letter from Mende in Chalkidike, fourth century BC; Jordan 2000: 92 n. 3; cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, B2.

Attica

35. Letter (?) on ceramic sherd from the agora of Athens, mid-sixth century BC.

Thompson 1948: 160 (pl. 41. 2); Jeffery 1990: 135, 137, pl. 22, no. 1; Guarducci 1974: 320–1; Lang 1976, B1; *AVI* no. 540. Cf. Pébarthe 2007: 81; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A5.

[Θαμνε]ῦ : κάθες : ὑπὸ τῷ ἠοδοῖ τᾶς θύρας τὸ κάπο : πρίον(α)

Thamneus, put the saw under the threshold of the door of the garden.

The letter forms correspond to those in use at Megara; the writer must have been a Megarian. The name is almost entirely restored by Lang, on the basis of the fact that in the same pit two vases belonging to Thamneus (in Attic letters) were found.

36. Letter on ceramic sherd from the agora of Athens, early fifth century BC.

Lang 1976, B2; Oikonomides 1986, no. 9 (*SEG* 36, 124). Cf. Pébarthe 2007: 81–2; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A6.

Παῖ, τῷ Φαλά[νθοι] | ἄλλος κα<ι>νὸς κλ[ιντέρ]- | ας φόρει.

Lang's restorations, *exempli gratia*.

Slave, bring to Phalanthos other new beds.

Oikonomides 1986, 51–2, no. 9 proposes a very different restoration: Παῖ, τῷ Φαλία[ι μεγ]- | ἄλος κανὸς κα[ὶ ἡμάντ]- | ας φόρει, 'Slave, put on Phalias (a donkey) big baskets and leather straps.' If this changes the details of the message, it does not modify its overall structure.

37. Letter on an amphora sherd from the agora of Athens, second quarter of the fifth century BC.

Lang 1976, B 7; *AVI* no. 496. Cf. Pébarthe 2007: 82; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A7.

Εὐμελὶς ἦκ[ε] | ὅς τάχος | Ἀρκέσιμος

Eumelis come as quickly as possible. Arkesimos.

The above is Lang's understanding of the text. As Immerwahr (*AVI* no. 496) rightly points out, however, 'the problem is that the ancients do not sign their letters on the bottom'.

38. Graffito on the inner part of handle and adjacent part of lip and body of a black-figure skyphos from the agora of Athens, last quarter of the fifth century BC.

Lang 1976, B 9; *BE* 1977, no. 122 (*SEG* 26, 67); Jordan 1978: 92–4 (*SEG* 28, 41); Oikonomides 1986: 49, no. 6 (*SEG* 36, 121); *AVI* no. 272. Cf. Pébarthe 2007: 82; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A9.

Σοσίνεο(ς) | ἐπέστελε | Γλαύκοι | ἐς ἄστυ | ἔνδεσμο(ν)

Sosineos sends to Glaukos in the city a bundle.

For Lang, this is a tag ('Sosineos sent a bundle to Glaukos in town'); but ἐπέστελε here implies that this is a letter (J. and L. Robert, *BE* 1977, no. 122, who assume that we have here only the beginning of a letter). However, the sherd seems to have been broken before the inscription: there probably was not much else. Hence the proposal of Immerwahr, *AVI* no. 272, to translate 'Sosineos [sends] to Glaukos: a bundle into the city (sc. I have sent)'; but it is necessary to supply information (the intended 'I have sent', or possibly also an order, 'send') for this to work. As there is no further verb, the letter may have travelled with the bundle. A further possibility has been aired by Jordan 1978, who reads the final line as a dative (ἐν δεσμῷ[ι]), and takes this to mean 'a scroll-like parcel': 'Sosineos sent a letter in form of a scroll to Glaukos in town'; this seems extremely unlikely (see discussion above, 44 n. 81).

39. Letter on lead sheet (4 × 7 cm), from Chaïdari near Daphni (Athens), fifth–fourth century BC.

IG iii 3 App., pp. ii–iii; A. Wilhelm 1904a: 94–105 (photograph; cf. *Syll*³. 1259); Trapp 2003: 198–9. Cf. Jordan 2003: 32–3; Pébarthe 2007: 82–3; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A1.

Outside: φέρειν ἰς τὸν κέραμ- | ον τὸν χυτρικόν, | ἀποδόναι δὲ Νausíαι | ἢ Θρασυκλῆι ἢ
θυίῳ.

Inside: Μνησίεργος | ἐπέστειλε τοῖς οἴκοι | χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν· | καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως
ἔφασκε [ἔχεν] | στέγασμα, εἴ τι βόλεσσε, | ἀποπέμψαι ἢ ὥας ἢ διφθέρας | ὥς
εὐτελεστά(τα)ς καὶ μὴ σισυρωτάς | καὶ κατύματα : τυχὸν ἀποδώσω.

Outside: Carry it into the pottery (district?). And give it to Nausias or Thrasykles or the son.

Inside: Mnesiergos sends to the people at home greetings and good health; he said that he too was like that. Send a covering, if you please, sheepskins or goatskins, the cheapest possible and not shaped into cloaks, and shoe-soles; I will make a return when I get the chance.

40. Letter (?) on lead, c.5 cm. long and 0.1 cm. thick, from the Pnix of Athens, 425–325 BC.

Raubitschek 1943: 10–11 (facsimile fig. 11); *BE* 1944, no. 90; Vinogradov 1998: 153 n. 4, no. 16 (*SEG* 49, 325). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A2. What follows is Raubitschek's text:

Θεοί
χαίρε(ι)ν καὶ [- - -]
Γναθίῳ παρ[- - -]
ην Ἀριγνώτο[- - -]
5 κατέθετο δι[- - -]
αρμενεί[- - -]
αρχεῖ[- - -]

The nature of the text is not evident: the second word, χαίρειν, is typical of the opening of a letter; on the other hand, the invocation 'gods', θεοί, at the beginning is surprising. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, 43 n. 62, speak of 'interesting echo of a public document, if the reading is correct'.

The possibilities are as follows:

1. J. and L. Robert, *BE* 1944, no. 90, proposed: *θεοί. χαίρεν καὶ [ὑγιαίνειν]* (as in the letter of Mnesiergos). ‘Gods. Greetings and good health’ which they must have thought could be followed by something along these lines: ‘For Gnathios, *on the part of [name] son of Arignotos [name] deposited.*’
2. Alternatively, Vinogradov 1998: n. 4, no. 16 proposed, on the assumption of shorter lines: *Θεογ[νέτωι] | χαίρε(ι)ν καὶ | Γναθίωι· παῖ[s] | ἦν Ἀριγνώτῳ, | κατέθετο δι’ | ἀρμενεῖ- | α ἔκει[ν - -]* (‘Greetings to Theognetos and Gnathios; the slave of Arignotos was here, he deposited . . .’). Here, while the beginning works well, it is difficult to see where the *pais* (‘slave’) of Arignotos comes from. If we stick to Vinogradov’s idea of very short lines, something like *παρ|ῆν Ἀρίγνωτο[s]* (‘Arignotos came, he deposited . . .’) might work better; however, this requires supposing that the line end did not coincide with the word end, as seems to be the case in the rest of this text.

The use of *κατέθετο* at l. 5 shows that this concerns a commercial transaction; the tense is interesting (epistolary past?). *τὰ ἄρμενα* (of which *αρμενεια* possibly is a diminutive) points to small tools, or alternatively, to sails or tackle of a ship.

41. Letter on a rolled up lead sheet (5 × 13.4 cm) from the agora in Athens, beginning of fourth century BC.

Jordan 2000: 91–103 (with photographs and facsimile) (*SEG* 50, 276) cf. Harris 2004: 157–70; Harvey 2007: 49–50; Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A3.

- A *Λῆσις {us} ἐπιστέλλει Ξενοκλεί καὶ τῇ μητρὶ μηδαμῶς περιυδὲν αὐτὸν ἀπολόμενον ἐν τῷ χαλκείῳ, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸς δεσπότης αὐτὸ ἐλθὲν καὶ ἐνευρῆσθαι τι βέλτιον αὐτῷ. Ἀνθρώπῳ γὰρ παραδεδόμαι πάνυ πονηρῶν· μαστιγόμενος ἀπόλλυμαι· δέδεμαι· προπηλακίζομαι· μάλλον μᾶ[λ]λον.*
- B Faint traces of letters on what would have been, once the sheet was rolled up, the outer part, probably corresponding to the address.

Lesis sends to Xenokles and his mother by no means to overlook that he is perishing in the foundry but to come to his masters and find something better for him. For I have been handed over to a man thoroughly wicked. I am perishing from being whipped; I am tied up; I am treated like dirt; more and more. (Trans. Jordan)

42. Private lead ‘letter’ from Athens (dimensions: c. 8.5 × 8 cm), present location unknown, dated to before 370/369 BC.

Edited from a photograph by Jordan 2003: 23–39 (*SEG* 53, 256; Gauthier, *BE* 2004, no. 140); Sosin 2008: 105–8; cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, A4.

- [Π]ασιών <Δ>ικαιάρχο ἐπιστέλλ-
ω Σατυρίωνα τιμωρήσ-
ασθαι καὶ μετελθὲν κα-
ὶ Νικόστρατον τὸν Δείν-
5 ων[ο]ς ἀδελφὸν καὶ Ἀρε-
θόσιον, ὡς παρ’ ἐμέ ἀδι-
κῶσι καὶ ἐπιβολεύουσι,
καὶ Γλαυκέτην καὶ Αἰα-
ντόδωρον καὶ ἐπιβολ-
10 εύουσι καὶ μὴ πρότερον
[πρ]οστέλεσθῆναι τῇ-
[ν - - - - c.17 - - - -]

1: [Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαιάρχο Jordan; [Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαιάρχ<ωι> [vel sim.], or, less likely, Πασίωνι ΚΑΙΑΡΧΟ Sosin.

I, Pasion, son of <D>ikaiarchos, am sending by letter, to punish and prosecute Satyrion and Nikostratos, Deinon's brother, and Arethousios because they are wronging me and plotting against me and Glauketes and Aiantodoros and they are plotting and that X not be paid before . . .

The text above is problematic, since there is no addressee. Jordan had interpreted: 'I, Pasion son of Dikaiarchos, am sending a letter for Satyrion to punish and prosecute . . .'; but the construction of ἐπιστέλλω + accusative and infinitive is unusual. Hence, Sosin's proposal of restoring an addressee in the dative in the first line, which would yield a translation as follows:

I, Pasion, am sending by letter to <D>ikaiarchos, to punish and prosecute Satyrion and Nikostratos, Deinon's brother, and Arethousios because they are wronging me and plotting against me and Glauketes and Aiantodoros and they are plotting and that X not be paid before . . .

In Sosin's translation, this is a letter without prescript, but with a sender and an addressee, Pasion and Dikaiarchos. Alternatively, as Sosin himself suggests, one could assume that in l. 1 the writer had intended to write 'Πασίωνι Δικαιάρχῳ' (the missing Δ is almost easier to understand this way); in this case, an unnamed sender (his name would have been on the outside) is asking Pasion son of Dikaiarchos to deal with his affairs. The letter would have been a kind of 'safe-conduct' for Pasion. The insistence on punishment on the one hand and plotting on the other, in a letter written on lead, seems to me to speak for an interpretation as a curse, or rather, in this specific case, as a prayer for justice (on epistolary curses see above, ch. 2. 3). Although in curses the *defigens* usually avoids naming himself/herself, this does not apply in the same measure to judicial prayers (but it is surprising to find not only the name of the curser, but also his patronymic!) The first person and the use of *τιμωρέω* find a parallel in an unpublished curse tablet from the sanctuary of Palaimon in Athens, also dated to the fourth century BC (discussed in Versnel 2009: 311–12 and 317).

B. Documents whose letter status is uncertain

1. A graffito on a black glazed skyphos from Panskoje I, on the north shore of the Black sea, dated c.300 BC. Two lines of writing were incised concentrically, one on the inner and one on the outer part of the base; these are almost illegible. Better preserved is the graffito on the inner part of the vase (remains of six lines are visible), inscribed in the same hand.

Vinogradov 1997: 486 (SEG 42, 722); Jajlenko 2001: 223–32 (SEG 51, 984). Cf. Eidinow and Taylor 2010, E16.

The document had been restored by Vinogradov 1997: 486 as an extract of the proxeny decree from Olbia of 340–330 BC, with which the Olbiopolitai honoured the Athenians Xanthippos son of Aristophon of the deme Erchia and Philopolis son of Philopolis of the deme Deirades (I. E. Levi, *Inscriptiones Olbiae* (1917–1965) (Leningrad, 1968), no. 5). According to Vinogradov, we should imagine the atmosphere of the symposium as the context for the engraving of the extract (which concerns only Xanthippos):

[Α]τῆλε[ια] | Ἀγαθεὶ τύχ[ει]- | [Ῥ]οβιοπολίται ἐδ[ω]- | [καν] Ξανθίπ(πωι) τῶι vacat | 5
[Ἀριστο(φώντος)? Ερ]χιεῖ? καὶ ἐν ἐ[ί]- | [ρήν]ηι πᾶσι τ[οῖς] α[ὐτοῦ?] - - - -

Exemption from taxation. To good fortune. The citizens of Olbia gave to Xanthippos the (son of Aristophon? of) Erchia both in [peace for all] his [descendants?]

Jajlenko (2001: 223–32) has proposed to read in the signs of l. 4 numerals, making of this a commercial letter:

[ὁ δεῖνα ἐπέσ]τελε [τῶι δεῖνι] | ἀγαθεῖ τύ[χαι - -] | [Ῥ]ο]λβιοπολίται EX[- - -] |
[- -]A:N οἱ IT[- -] | 5 [- - - -] XΣ και ENE [- -] | [- - - -]IΣ[- - - -]

[X to Z] sends, good fortune! [- -] The inhabitants of Olbia, 51 vases for a price of 5 drachmae and a quarter . . . stater

Chaniotis in *SEG* 51, 984 remarks that in a letter one would expect the present ἐπιστέλλει and not ἐπέσ]τελε (this is, however, debatable, as it could be an epistolary past: compare the letter of Mnesiergos, no. 35). More importantly, he notes that ἀγαθῇ τύ[χαι does not make much sense in a letter or an invoice.

2. A graffito on a black-glazed vase from Nikonion, dated to the late fifth–early fourth century BC.

The first editor, V. Alekseyev (*VDI* 2004.3 70–3 no. 4, in Russian; cf. *SEG* 54, 691) thought that these lines reflected a contest within a symposium. The text has been republished by S. Yu. Saprykin (in *Εὐχαριστήριον - - Domanskogo* (St. Petersburg, 2007), 68–71, in Russian; cf. *SEG* 57, 717), who prefers to see here personal notes about the area by a sea-captain or merchant from a Doric polis. A. Avram, *BE* 2008, no. 397 and 397bis, points out that this text may be a private letter or an oracular enquiry; if the latter, it might have been addressed to Achilles in Leuke. Below, Avram's text:

Ἡρακλείδας: T[- - - - -]
περὶ χόρῳ ποτ[- - - - -]
αἶπερ τινὶ κάλ[λωι - - - - -]

3. Lead tablet from Pech-Maho, c.450–440 BC.

SEG 38, 1036; *SEG* 41, 891; Decourt 2004, no. 135.

Although categorized as letter by Dana 2007: 68, this document looks rather more like the memorandum of a commercial transaction, and belongs with commercial agreements rather than letters.

4. and 5. Two texts on lead from Lattes (near Montpellier) and Ruscino (near Perpignan).

M. Bats (2011: 203–4) mentions two texts on lead (I should like to record my thanks to M. Dana for alerting me to the existence of these documents). One is an extremely damaged document from Lattes, dated to c.430 BC by the archaeological context. It had been folded in three, and is perforated at the base as if by nails; one word seems to be legible, οκταν (cf. Py 2009: 304–5, with photograph). The other comes from Ruscino, probably dates to the fourth century BC, and is to be published by J. de Hoz. As long as they remain unpublished, the status of these documents (letters? memorandums? see Decourt, *BE* 2012 no. 512) remains uncertain.

C. A unique later document from Acra on the Cimmerian Bosphorus

Official lead letter of Hellenistic or imperial times from Acra: lead plaque (7.5 × 6.5 cm) folded in four, found in the sea; seven lines of text are preserved, from the upper left part of the plaque, dated by the editors on the basis of the writing to between the second half of the third century BC and the second century AD.

Saprykin and Fedoseev 2008: 72–9 (with illegible photograph and English summary at 79–80), also published (in English) in Saprykin and Fedoseev 2010b: 427–34 (*SEG* 58, 775).

Βότρυς ὁ ἐπὶ πόλει[ως...] | πωι χαίρειν· ἱερὰ πάννυ[ρα? - -] | σοῦ μὲν ὡ<ς> σωτηρία
 ὑπ[οκείσθαι ? -] | στοὰ ὑπὸ ὕδρο[ποιού ? - -] | ἄ]πασιν ἐπ' ἀτέρων [- - | -] ἀρῇ καὶ ἴσε
 ὀβ[ρίμω ? - -] | [- -] αὐτῇ ἐν ὕ[δατι ? - -].

The letter, much later than any other lead letter, is for the time being a *unicum*. It is sent by a magistrate in charge of the city to a (Phili)ppos (or Leoni)ppos.

Botrys may have been a royal official, appointed by one of the Bosporan kings, or a prefect (see the comments of A. Avram, *BE* 2009, no. 384). The very fragmentary remaining lines of the letter have been understood by the editors as concerning flooding risks; but as Avram points out, ll. 2–4 can also be (better) restored as ἱερὰ παννυ[ερτάτωι ἐσ] | σουμένω Σοτήρι αὐτ[οκράτορι] | στοὰ, while the two final lines escape interpretation (at l. 5 Avram proposes ἐ<κ> ατέρων). The interesting point from our perspective is that if Botrys sends a (lead) letter, although he is based in Acra and the topic discussed concerns the internal administration of Acra, this means that for internal communications a letter was indeed the expected format; the choice of the lead remains slightly surprising.

APPENDIX 2

Ancient Traditions on the Invention of Writing

In what follows I have collected some of the main (and less accessible) Greek sources on the invention of writing. For more detail, I must refer to the formidable collection of data in Schneider 2004, as well as to Jeffery 1967. I have preferred to present the scholia as a whole, rather than to extract the ancient authorities from them. Authorities are underlined; inventors are in bold.

1. Scholia in Dionysii Thracis artem grammaticam, ed. Hilgard (*Grammatici Graeci*, i. 3 (Leipzig, 1901)).¹

Commentarius sub auctore Melampode vel Diomede, schol. Dion. Thr. 32. 9–13:

Τινὲς δέ φασι τοὺς χαρακτῆρας τῶν στοιχείων τοὺς παρ' ἡμῖν ὑπὸ Ἑρμοῦ ἐν φοίνικος φύλλῳ γεγραμμένους καταπεμφθῆναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, διὸ καὶ φοινίκεια λέγεται τὰ γράμματα· οἱ δέ, ὅτι Φοινίκων ἐστὶν εὗρεις· οἱ δέ, ὅτι ὁ παιδαγωγὸς τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως ὁ Φοῖνιξ ἐφέευνεν αὐτά.

Some say that the shapes of the elements which we use were transmitted to mankind by Hermes, written on a palm-leaf, which is why the letters are called *phoinikeia*; others however say that they are a discovery of the **Phoenicians**; yet others, that the paedagogue of Achilles, **Phoenix**, invented them.

Scholia Vaticana, schol. Dion. Thr. 182. 15–183. 23:

Περὶ δὲ τῆς τῶν γραμμάτων εὐρέσεως διαφόρως οἱ ἱστορικοὶ ἱστόρησαν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ Προμηθεά λέγουσι τούτων εὐρετὴν, ἄλλοι δὲ Φοίνικα τὸν τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως παιδαγωγόν, ἄλλοι δὲ τὸν Μιλήσιον Κάδμον, ἄλλοι δὲ τὴν Ἀθηναίαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐρρίφθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πρὸς ὠφέλειαν. εὗρηται δὲ οὐχ ὑφ' ἑνὸς ἅπαντα· ὕστερον γὰρ ἐπενοήθησαν [20] τὰ δασέα καὶ τὰ διπλά· πρὶν γὰρ ταῦτα ἐπινοήθησαν, τοῖς ἀντιστοίχοις ἐχρῶντο, οἷον εἰ ἠθέλησαν χ ποιῆσαι, ἐποίουν κ καὶ δασεῖαν, εἰ δὲ θ ἢ φ, πάλιν ὁμοίως τὰ ἀντίστοιχα μετὰ δασεῖων, ὡς νῦν οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ τὰ διπλά δέ, ἐξ ὧν σύγκεινται. ἄλλοι δὲ λέγουσιν, ὅτι καὶ τὰ μακρὰ τελευταῖον ἐπενοήθησαν, τῶν βραχέων τὸ πρότερον μετὰ μακρᾶς [25] προστιθεμένης ἄνωθεν ἀναπληρούντων <αὐτῶν> τὴν τάξιν· ἐποίουν γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ ω ο καὶ ἄνω<θεν> μακράν, καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ η ε καὶ ἄνωθεν μακράν. Τινὲς δὲ φοινίκεια ἐκάλεσαν τὰ γράμματα, <οἷον ἐφωνίκεια,> παρὰ τὸ τῆς φωνῆς εἰκόνα εἶναι τὰ γράμματα.

(183.) Τῶν στοιχείων εὐρετὴν ἄλλοι τε καὶ Ἐφορος ἐν δευτέρῳ Κάδμον φασίν· οἱ δὲ οὐχ εὐρετὴν, τῆς δὲ Φοινίκων εὐρέσεως πρὸς ἡμᾶς διάκτορον γεγενῆσθαι, ὡς καὶ Ἡρόδοτος ἐν ταῖς ἱστορίαις καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ἱστορεῖ· φασὶ γὰρ ὅτι Φοίνικες μὲν εὗρον τὰ [5] στοιχεῖα, Κάδμος δὲ ἤγαγεν αὐτὰ εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Πυθόδωρος δὲ [ὡς] ἐν τῷ περὶ στοιχείων καὶ Φίλλιος ὁ Δῆλιος ἐν τῷ περὶ χρόνων πρὸ Κάδμου Δαναὸν μετακομίσαι αὐτὰ φασιν· ἐπιμαρτυροῦσι τούτοις καὶ οἱ Μιλησιακοὶ συγγραφεῖς Ἀναξίμανδρος καὶ Διονύσιος καὶ Ἐκαταῖος, οὓς καὶ Ἀπολλόδωρος ἐν Νέων καταλόγῳ παρατίθεται. [10] ἔνιοι δὲ Μουσαῖον εὐρετὴν λέγουσι τὸν Μητίονος καὶ Στερόπης κατ' Ὁρφέα γενόμενον· Ἀντικλείδης δὲ ὁ Ἀθηναῖος Αἰγυπτίους τὴν εὐρεσιν ἀνατίθησιν· Δοσιαῆς δὲ ἐν Κρήτῃ φησὶν εὐρεθῆναι αὐτὰ· Αἰσχύλος δὲ Προμηθεά

¹ For the various collections (commentaries of Diomedes and Melampous, *Scholia Vaticana*, *Scholia Marciana*, *Scholia Londinensia*) forming these scholia, and for their relationship see Lallot 1998; Schneider 2004: 120. On the passage of Dionysius Scytobrachion (no. 3 below) see Corcella 1986; on Ptolemy Pindarion and Pronapides, the teacher of Homer responsible for the introduction of the letters at Athens, see Montanari 1995: 41–58, with further references.

φησὶν εὐρηκέναι ἐν τῷ ὁμωνύμῳ δράματι, Στήσιχος δὲ ἐν δευτέρῳ Ὅρεστείας καὶ Εὐριπίδης τὸν [15] Παλαμήδην φησὶν εὐρηκέναι, Μνασέας δὲ Ἑρμῆν, ἄλλοι δὲ ἄλλον. πῦθάνον δὲ κατὰ πάντα τόπον εὐρετὰς γεγενῆσθαι, διὸ καὶ ἄλλοι παρ' ἄλλοις εἰσὶ χαρακτήρες τῶν στοιχείων· οἷς δὲ νυνὶ χρώμεθα, εἰσὶν Ἰωνικοί, εἰσενέγκαντος Ἀρχίνου παρ' Ἀθηναίοις ψήφισμα, τοὺς γραμματιστάς, ἦγουν τοὺς διδασκάλους, παιδεύειν τὴν Ἰωνικὴν γραμματικὴν, ἦγουν τὰ [20] γράμματα. Διέταξε δὲ τὰ στοιχεῖα γράφεσθαι ὡς γράφομεν νῦν Προναπίδης ὁ Ἀθηναῖος· τῶν γὰρ ἀρχαίων οἱ μὲν σπειρηδὸν ἔγραφον, οἱ δὲ πλινθηδὸν, οἱ δὲ βουστροφηδὸν, οἱ δὲ κιονηδὸν [περὶ ὧν ἐν τοῖς ἐξῆς ἔχομεν μαθεῖν].

The historians give different accounts of the invention of the letters: some say that **Prometheus** discovered them, others **Phoenix** the paedagogue of Achilles, others **Cadmus** the Milesian, others **Athena**, and others that they fell **from the sky** for men's use. But they were not discovered, all of them, by one person: for the aspirated and the doubles were discovered later, and before they thought of these, they used the corresponding letters. Thus if they wanted to express *chi*, they used *k* and the aspirate, if *theta* or *phi*, again equally the corresponding signs with aspirates, as do the Romans; as for the doubles, they used those out of which they are formed. Others, however, say that also the longs were found at the end, and that initially the short vowels accomplished their purpose having a long added on top. For they used to write instead of *ω*, *ο* with a macron above, and instead of *η*, *ε*, also with a macron above.

And some called the letters *phoinikeia*, <as if *phoinikeia*>, because the letters (*grammata*) are the image of the voice (*phone*).²

But others, among whom Ephorus in his second book [FGrH 70 F 105], say that **Cadmus** was the inventor of the letters; for others he was not the inventor, but the transmitter of the Phoenicians' invention to us, as both Herodotus in his *Histories* (5.58) and Aristotle [fr. 501 Rose] recount; for they say that the **Phoenicians** invented the letters, but **Cadmus** brought them to Greece. For their part, Pythodorus in his book *On Letters* and Phillis of Delos in his book *On Times* say that **Danaus** brought them over before **Cadmus**; their statements are supported by the Milesian writers Anaximander [FGrH 9 F 3], Dionysius [FGrH 687 F 1] and Hecataeus [FGrH 1 F 20], who are also mentioned in this respect by Apollodorus in his *Catalogue of the Ships* [FGrH 244 F 165]. Other say that **Musaeus**, the son of Metion and Sterope, who lived at the time of Orpheus, was their inventor; Anticlidēs the Athenian [FGrH 140 F 11a, cf. 11b] attributes their invention to the **Egyptians**; Dosiadas [FGrH/BNJ 458 F 6] says that they were invented in **Crete**; Aeschylus affirms in his homonymous play [v. 460] that **Prometheus** invented them, while Stesichorus in the second book of his *Oresteia* [fr. 213 PMG] and Euripides [cf. fr. 578 Kannicht] say that the inventor was **Palamedes**; Mnaseas [fr. 52 Cappelletto] proposes **Hermes**, and others others. One must believe that there were inventors in each given place, since the shapes of the letters are also different in the various localities; those which we use now are the Ionian, as a result of Archinus' introducing in Athens a decree, that the *grammatistai*, that is the teachers, teach the Ionian *grammatike*, that is the letters. **Pronapides** the Athenian arranged that the letters be written as we write now; for among the ancients, some wrote in coiled lines, others arranging them as bricks in rectangles, others boustrophedon, other in columns.

Scholia Vaticana, schol. Dion. Thr. 184. 20–186. 4 Hilgard:

Φοινίκη δὲ τὰ γράμματα ἐλέγοντο, ὥς φησιν Ἐφορος ὁ Κυμαῖος καὶ Ἡρόδοτος, ἐπεὶ Φοίνικες εὗρον αὐτά· Εὐφρόνιος δέ, ὅτι μῖλτω τὸ πρότερον ἐγράφοντο, ὃ ἔστι χρώμα τι φοινικοῦν· Ἐτεωνεύς <δὲ> καὶ Μένανδρος, ἐπειδὴ ἐν πετάλοις φοινικείοις ἐγράφοντο· ἢ, ὅπερ κρείττον ἐστὶν εἰπεῖν, ὅτι φοινίσσεται ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νοῦς ἦγουν λαμπρύνεται. [25] Ἀνδρῶν δὲ καὶ Μενεκράτης ὁ Ὀλύμπιος ἀπὸ Φοινίκης τῆς Ἀκταίωνος θυγατρὸς· Ἀπολλώνιος δὲ ὁ τοῦ Ἀρχιβίου, ἐπειδὴ οἱ ἀντίγραφοι ἀπὸ φοίνικος ξύλον εἶχον καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἔγραφον· Δούρις δὲ ὁ Σάμιος ὁ ἱστορικός ἐν ὁγδοῇ <τῶν> Μακεδονικῶν ἀπὸ Φοινίκης τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως τροφοῦ·

² For the connection between sound and sign see above, 14–15, 21, 29, 65, 67 n. 27. Lucan, *Phars.* 3. 220–1, combines Phoenicians and voice: *Phoenices primi, famae si creditur, ausi | mansuram rudibus vocem signare figuris* ('The Phoenicians were the first, if rumor is to be believed, who dared to mark with rough signs the voice, so as to make it last').

Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ὁ Ῥόδιος ἀπὸ Φοίνικος τοῦ (185.) Προνάπου καὶ Εὐρώπης, εὐρόντος αὐτὰ ἐν Κρήτῃ, ὃν ἀπέκτεινε Ῥαδάμανθους φθονήσας. εὔρεται δὲ τῶν λοιπῶν [τῶν] χαρακτῆρων, τουτέστι τῶν ὀκτώ, οἷον τῶν δύο μακρῶν καὶ τῶν τριῶν διπλῶν καὶ <τῶν> τριῶν δασέων, [5] δηλονότι Σιμωνίδης μὲν ὁ Κεῖος τῶν δύο μακρῶν καὶ τοῦ ξ καὶ τοῦ ψ, Παλαμῆδης δὲ τῶν δασέων καὶ τοῦ ζ, ἥ, ὡς φασί τινας, Ἐπίχαρμος ὁ Συρακούσιος.

Ὅσοι <δὲ> τὴν τῶν γραμμάτων εὗρευν Σισύφῳ ἢ Παλαμῆδῃ ἢ Φοίνικι ἢ Προμηθεὶ ἐφάππουσιν, ἢ ἐν Φοινίκῃ ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ πεπτωκέναι φασίν, ἢ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις εὕρηκέναι Θωῷ, ὃν Ἑρμῆν ἐρμηνεύουσιν, [10] <οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγουσιν>· καὶ γὰρ ἡ φύσις ἡνίκα ἐδημιούργησε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τοιαύτην ἐπιτηδειότητα, ὥστε τεχνάσασθαι ταῦτα τὰ στοιχεῖα. δείκνυνται δὲ ταῦτα καὶ πρὸ τῶν Ἰλιακῶν ὄντα, ὡς δῆλον ἐκ τῶν Βελλεροφόντων· φησὶ γὰρ ὁ ποιητὴς “γράφας ἐν πίνακι [15] πιτυκτῷ θυμοφθόρα πολλά.” ὁ δὲ Βελλεροφόντης πρὸ τοῦ Τρωϊκοῦ πολέμου ἦν, καὶ γὰρ πάππος ἦν τοῦ Γλαύκου τοῦ ἐν τῷ Τρωϊκῷ πολέμῳ ὄντος. ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν Πυθοὶ ἦν λέβης ἐπιγεγραμμένος “Ἀμφιτρύων μ' ἀνέθηκε λαβὼν ἀπὸ Τηλεβοίων.” καὶ ἐν Τάφῳ τῇ νήσῳ [20] “Ὠκεανὸς θυγάτηρ καὶ Τηθύος εἰμὶ Νύχεια | κρήνη· Τηλεβοῖαι γάρ με τόδ' ὠνόμασαν· | νύμφαις μὲν προχέω λουτρόν, θνητοῖσι δ' ὕγειν· | θῆκε δέ με Πτερέλας, υἱὸς Ἐνναλίου.”

Μετὰ δὲ τὸν ἐπὶ Δευκαλίωνος κατακλυσμὸν οὐδεὶς τῶν περιλειφθέντων [25] Ἑλλήνων ἐφύλαξεν αὐτῶν τὴν μνήμην, πλὴν τῶν Πελασγῶν τῶν ἀφ' Ἑλλάδος εἰς βαρβάρους πλανηθέντων, οὓς καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς διούς καλεῖ, φάσκων “καὶ Λέλεγες καὶ Καύκωνες διόι τε Πελασγοί.” παρ' ὧν μαθόντες πρῶτοι Φοίνικες εἰς Ἑλλάδας ἦγαγον, γείτονές τε βαρβάρων ὄντες καὶ συνεχεῖς ἐμπορίας ποιοῦμενοι· ὅθεν καὶ Φοινίκεα (186.) κτητικῶς ὀνομάζονται. οἱ δὲ φωνίκεα λέγουσιν αὐτά, οἵονεὶ φωνίκεα, ἐπειδὴ φωνῆς ἐγγραμματόντων δυνάμει εἰκόνας εἰσί, μεταβολῆς γεγονυίας τοῦ ω εἰς τὴν οι δίφθογγον κατὰ τὴν τῶν Βοιωτῶν διάλεκτον, ὥσπερ ἀγκώνῃ ἀγκοίνῃ.

They called the letters *phoinikeia*, ‘Phoenician’, as Ephorus of Cumae [70 F 105] and Herodotus [Hdt. 5. 58] say, because **Phoenicians** invented them; Euphronius however says, because earlier they used to write with a **red ochre** called *miltos* [red lead: Plin NH 33, 115], which has a reddish colour; and Eteoneus and Menander [BNJ 783 F 5], because they used to write on **palm leaves**; or, a better explanation, because the mind is **reddened** by them, that is, is brightened; but Andron [FGrH 10 F 9/ Bollansée, FGrHContIV 1055 F 5–6] and Menecrates from Olynthus affirm that the name derived from that of **Phoenice**, the daughter of Actaeon; Apollonius the son of Archibius [= Apollonius sophista], because the copying clerks had a wooden instrument made of **palm-wood** and wrote with it; Duris the Samian historiographer [FGrH 76 F 6] in the eight book of his *Macedonica* suggests that the name derives from **Phoenix** the tutor of Achilles; Alexander the Rhodian from **Phoenix** the son of Pronapos and Europe, who would have invented them in Crete; Rhadamanthus killed him out of envy. Inventors of the remaining eight characters, that is the two long vowels and the three doubles and the three aspirated, were for the two longs, the xi, and the psi, **Simonides** of Ceos, and for the aspirated and the zeta, **Palamedes** or, as some say, **Epicharmus** the Syracusan.

Those who connect the invention of the letters to **Sisyphus** or **Palamedes** or **Phoenix** or **Prometheus**, or who say that they fell from the sky in Phoenicia, or that **Thoth**, whom they interpret as **Hermes**, invented them in Egypt, <are not correct>; for nature, when she created man, also gave him an aptitude such as enabled the creation of these letters. And it appears that they existed already before the Trojan war, as is clear from the stories concerning Bellerophontes; for the poet says, ‘having written in a folded tablet many soul-destroying things’ [*Il.* 6. 169]; but Bellerophontes lived before the Trojan war, as he was the grandfather of Glaucus who participated in the Trojan war. Moreover, there was in Pytho a lebes inscribed with ‘Amphitryon dedicated me as booty from the Teleboi’ [Hdt. 5. 59]; and in the island Thasos: ‘Daughter of Ocean and Tethys, I am the source Nucheia; the Teleboi gave me this name; I pour water for brides-to-be, and health for the mortals; Pterelas son of Enyalios dedicated me’ [*Anth. Pal.* 9. 684].

After the flood at the time of Deucalion, none of those Hellenes that survived preserved a memory of them, but for the **Pelasgians** who had moved from Greece to the barbarians, those that the poet calls ‘divine’, saying ‘and the Leleges and the Caucones and the divine Pelasgians’ [*Il.* 10. 429]; and the **Phoenicians**, who lived close to the barbarians and dedicated themselves assiduously to commerce, having learnt the letters from them first brought them to

Greece; hence they are named *phoinikeia*. But others consider them to have been named *phoinikeia* as if *phonikeia*, implying a change of the omega to the diphthong *oi* according to the Boeotian dialect, as with *anghone* and *angkoine*, because they are potential images of the written voice.

Scholia Vaticana, schol. Dion. Thr. 190. 19–35 (cf. 191. 19–192. 7) Hilgard:

Ἄλλως εἰς τὸ αὐτό.—Τῶν στοιχείων ὁ Κάδμος εὐρετής ἐστιν, ὡς φησιν Ἐφορος καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης· ἄλλοι δὲ λέγουσιν, ὅτι Φοινίκων εἰσὶν εὐρήματα, Κάδμος δὲ ταῦτα διεπόρθμευσεν εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα· Πυθόδωρος δὲ φησιν ὅτι καὶ πρὸ Κάδμου ὁ Δαναὸς ἐκείθεν, ἥτοι ἀπὸ Φοινίκης, αὐτὰ μετεκόμισεν· ἔνιοι δὲ Μουσαῖον εὐρετὴν λέγουσι τῶν στοιχείων τὸν Μητίονος καὶ Στερόπης, γενόμενον κατὰ τοὺς καιροὺς [25] τοῦ Ὀρφέως· Ἀντικλείδης δὲ τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις τὴν εὐρεσιν ἀνατίθησιν· Αἰσχύλος δὲ Προμηθέα φησὶν εὐρηκέναι αὐτά· Δοσιάδης δὲ ἐν Κρήτῃ λέγει εὐρεθῆναι αὐτά· Στησίχορος δὲ Παλαμήδην εὐρετὴν αὐτῶν ποιεῖται, ᾧ συμφωνεῖ καὶ Εὐριπίδης, Μνασέας δὲ <Ερμῆν· πιθάνον δὲ> κατὰ πάντα τόπον εὐρετὰς γεγενῆσθαι [30] τῶν στοιχείων· <διὸ καὶ ἄλλοι παρ' ἄλλοις εἰσὶ χαρακτηριστῆρες τῶν στοιχείων> οἷς δὲ ἡμεῖς χρώμεθα νῦν, εἰσὶν Ἰωνικοί, διὰ τὸ ἀρχαιοτέραν εἶναι τὴν Ἰάδα τῶν ἄλλων διαλέκτων, καὶ αὐτὴν πρώτην τῶν ἄλλων τοὺς Ἑλληνηκοὺς εὐρεῖν τύπους. Διέταξε δὲ τὰ στοιχεῖα γράφεσθαι ὡς [35] γράφομεν νῦν Προναπίδης ὁ Ἀθηναῖος·

Differently, on the same subject. Cadmus is the discoverer of the letters, as Ephorus and Aristotle say; others however say that they are the discovery of the Phoenicians, and that Cadmus brought them over to Greece; Pythodorus says that Danaus brought them here from there, that is from Phoenicia, actually before Cadmus; some affirm that Musaeus, the son of Metion and Sterope, is the discoverer of the elements, a contemporary of Orpheus; Anticlides traces their invention back to the Egyptians; Aeschylus says that Prometheus invented them; Dosiadas says that they were discovered in Crete; Stesichorus makes of Palamedes their inventor, and Euripides agrees with him, while Mnaseas suggests Hermes. It must be believed that there were discoverers of the letters in each place; for the shapes of the elements are different in different places. Those which we use now are Ionian, because the Ionian is the most ancient of the other dialects, and she first of all found the Greek forms. But Pronapides the Athenian arranged that the elements be written, as we write now.

Scholia Vaticana, schol. Dion. Thr. 191. 29–192. 11 Hilgard:

Ἰστέον δὲ ὅτι βαρβάρων μὲν εἰσὶν εὐρέματα τὰ ὑφ' ἡγράμματα ταῦτα, α β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ σ τ υ, Σιμωνίδου δὲ τοῦ Κείνου εὐρεμα τὰ δύο μακρά, τὸ η καὶ τὸ ω, καὶ τὰ δύο διπλά, τὸ ξ καὶ τὸ ψ, Παλαμήδους δὲ τὰ τρία δασέα καὶ τὸ ζ.

Καλοῦνται δὲ τὰ στοιχεῖα φοινίκεια, ἐπεὶ ὁ Κάδμος Φοινίξ ὢν εἰς Ἑλλήνας ταῦτα μετένηγκεν· ἢ ὡς φοινικεῖα τινα ὄντα, ἥτοι φωνῆς [35] ἐγγραμμάτου δυνάμει[ς καὶ] εἰκόνες, τοῦ ὡ μεταβληθέντος εἰς τὴν οἰ δίφθογγον κατὰ τὴν Βοιωτῶν διάλεκτον, ὡς τὸ ἀγκώνη ἀγκοῖνη· τὴν γὰρ ἀγκάλην, ἥτις ἐκ τοῦ ἀγκῶνος ἀγκώνη λέγεται, ἀγκοῖνην οἱ Βοιωτοὶ [192] λέγουσιν· οὕτως οὖν καὶ φοινίκεια φοινίκεια, κατὰ τὸ εἶδος τὸ παράγωγον τὸ λεγόμενον κτητικὸν σχηματιζόμενα· ἢ φοινίκεια, ἐπεὶ διὰ μίλτου, ὅπερ ἐστὶ χρώμα φοινικοῦν, πρότερον ἐγράφετο ἢ ὅτι πρότερον ἐν πετάλοις φοινικείοις ἐγράφετο· ἢ ὅτι ἐν πυρρῷδε κηρῷ ἐτυποῦντο· ἢ, [5] ὅπερ ἐστὶ κρείττον, ὅτι φοινίσσεται ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νοῦς ἡγουν λαμπρύνεται. Τινὲς δὲ λέγουσι κατὰ ἱστορίαν, ὅτι ἀπὸ Φοινίκης τῆς Ἀκταίωνος θυγατρὸς· ἄλλοι ἀπὸ Φοίνικος <τοῦ> Προνάτου καὶ Εὐρώπης. λέγεται δὲ στοιχεῖον ἢ παρὰ τὸ σείχω, τὸ <ἐν τάξει> πορεύομαι, ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ στοίχου τοῦ σημαίνοντος τὴν τάξιν, ἢ ἀπὸ Στοίχου τινός, [10] Ἀθηναίου γηγενοῦς, εὐρόντος αὐτά, ὡς Πινδαρίων φησί· σχηματίζεται δὲ παρὰ τὸ στοίχος στοιχεῖον.

It should be known that the following sixteen letters, α β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ σ τ υ, are the invention of barbarians, the two longs, η and ω, as well as the two doubles, ξ and ψ, are the discovery of Simonides of Ceos, while the three aspirates and the ζ of Palamedes. The elements are called *phoinikeia*, because Cadmus, a Phoenician, brought them to Greece; or because they are 'phonic', that is power and image of the written sound, with the ω having

changed to the diphthong *oi* according to the Boeotian dialect, as *ankone ankoinē*; for the Boeotian call the *ankale* ['bent arm'], which is the *ankone*, from *ankon*, the bend of the elbow, *ankoinē*. So then Phoenician from phonic, formed according to the derived figure called possessive; or *phoinikeia*, because earlier, people wrote with *miltos*, which is a reddish colour, or because earlier, people wrote on palm-leaves; or because they were impressed in reddish wax; or, which seems the best argument, because through them the mind is illuminated, that is, clarified. But some affirm that (they are called *phoinikeia*) according to the story that they took the name from **Phoenice** the daughter of Actaeon; others, from **Phoenix** the son of Pronapos and Europe. The *stoichos* ['element'] takes its name either from 'to march', when I advance in line, or from the element that indicates the rank, or from a certain **Stoichus**, an Athenian born of the earth, who found them, as Pindarion [= Ptolemy Pindarion, cf. *RE Suppl.* 9, Ptolemaios 78a] says; and from *stoichos* is formed *stoicheion*.

Scholia Marciana, schol. Dion. Thr. 320. 17–30 Hilgard:

Οὔτε δὲ γράμματα εἶχον οἱ Ἕλληνες ἐξ ἀρχῆς, ἀλλὰ διὰ Φοινικίων γραμμάτων ἔγραφον τὰ ἑαυτῶν· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὰ τὰ Φοινίκηια, τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ὡς καὶ τὰ Ἑβραϊκά, κατὰ μίμησιν τῶν Ἑβραίων [20] τοῖς Φοίνιξιν εὐρέθη. Παλαμῆδης δ' ὕστερον ἐλθὼν, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄλφα, δεκαεξὲς μόνῃ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν εὗρε στοιχεῖα, α β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ σ τ υ· προσέθηκε δὲ αὐτοῖς Κάδμος ὁ Μιλήσιος γράμματα τρία, θ φ χ, διὸ καὶ πολλῶ τῷ χρόνῳ τοῖς δεκαεννέα ἐχρῶντο· ὅθεν οἱ ἀρχαῖοι μὴ ἔχοντες τὸ ψ τὴν ψαλίδα πασίδα ἔγραφον καὶ ἔλεγον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλὰ ῥήματα ἄλλως ἐξεφώνουν καὶ ἔγραφον. μετὰ [25] ταῦτα Σιμωνίδης ὁ Κεῖος εὐρὼν προσέθηκε δύο, η καὶ ω, Ἐπίχαρμος δὲ ὁ Συρακούσιος τρία, ζ ξ ψ, καὶ οὕτως ἐπληρώθησαν τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα. Ὅθεν μιμησάμενος ὁ Ὀμηρος τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν εἰκοσιδύο βιβλίων τῶν παρ' Ἑβραίοις, εἰς τὸν τῶν εἰκοσιδύο στοιχείων τυπωθέντα ἀριθμὸν, καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ἰδίαν ποιήσιν τῆς Ἰλιάδος τῶν εἰκοσιτεσσάρων βαῖφωδιῶν διὰ τῶν εἰκοσιτεσσάρων στοιχείων ἐποίησεν· οὕτως δὲ καὶ τὴν Ὀδύσειαν.

Nor did the Greeks possess the letters from the beginning, but they wrote their own through the Phoenician letters; for even the Phoenician ones in their names, as the Hebrew letters, were discovered by the Phoenicians in imitation of the Jews. **Palamedes**, later, beginning with the *α* discovered for the Greeks sixteen *stoicheia* only, α β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ σ τ υ; **Cadmus** of **Miletus** added to them three letters, θ, φ, χ, so that for a long time only these nineteen signs were used; hence the ancients, not having the letter ψ, used to write and say *ψαλίδα* for *ψαλίδα*; and they also pronounced and wrote in a different way many other words. Afterwards, **Simonides** of Ceos found and added two letters, η and ω, and **Epicharmus** of Syracuse three, ζ, ξ, ψ, so that the number of 24 was reached. Hence Homer, imitating the number of the twenty-two books of the Jews, a number formed on the image of the twenty-two letters, himself organized his own poem of the *Iliad* in twenty-four rhapsodies, because of the twenty-four letters, and similarly for the *Odyssey*.

2. **Ephorus** of **Cumae**, *FGrH* 70 F 105a and b (v. *supra*, schol. Dion. Thr. 183, 1 and 184, 20 Hilgard); *FGrH* 70 F 105 c (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1. 75. 1):

Κάδμος δὲ Φοίνιξ ἦν ὁ τῶν γραμμάτων Ἕλλησιν εὐρετής, ὥς φησιν Ἐφωρος, ὅθεν καὶ Φοινίκηια τὰ γράμματα Ἡρόδοτος κεκλήσθαι γράφει. οἱ δὲ Φοίνικας καὶ Σύρους γράμματα ἐπινοῆσαι πρῶτους λέγουσιν.

Cadmus, who invented the letters for the Greeks, was Phoenician, as Ephorus says, and for this reason Herodotus writes that the letters were named Phoinikeia. Others say that the Phoenicians or Assyrians first thought of the letters.

3. **Dionysius Scytobrachion**, *FGrH/BNJ* 32 F 8 (D. S. 3. 67. 1):

Φησὶ τοίνυν παρ' Ἑλλήσι πρῶτον εὐρετὴν γενέσθαι Λῖνον ῥυθμῶν καὶ μέλους, ἔτι δὲ Κάδμου κομίσαντος ἐκ Φοινίκης τὰ καλούμενα γράμματα πρῶτον εἰς τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν μεταθεῖναι

διάλεκτον, καὶ τὰς προσηγορίας ἐκάστω τάξει καὶ τοὺς χαρακτήρας διατυπῶσαι. κοινῇ μὲν οὖν τὰ γράμματα Φοινικία κληθῆναι διὰ τὸ παρὰ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας ἐκ Φοινίκων μετενεχθῆναι, ἰδίᾳ δὲ τῶν Πελασγῶν πρώτων χρησαμένων τοῖς μετατεθείσι (20) χαρακτήρσι Πελασγικὰ προσαγορευθῆναι. [(2) τὸν δὲ Λίνον ἐπὶ ποιητικῇ καὶ μελῳδίᾳ θαυμασθέντα μαθητὰς σχεῖν πολλούς. . . (4) περὶ δὲ Ὀρφέως τοῦ τρίτου μαθητοῦ <τὰ> κατὰ μέρος ἀναγράφομεν, ὅταν τὰς πράξεις αὐτοῦ διεξίωμεν.] τὸν δ' οὖν Λίνον φασὶ τοῖς Πελασγικοῖς γράμμασι συνταξάμενον τὰς τοῦ πρώτου Διονύσου πράξεις καὶ τὰς ἄλλας μυθολογίας ἀπολιπεῖν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν. (5) ὁμοίως δὲ τούτοις χρῆσασθαι τοῖς Πελασγικοῖς γράμμασι τὸν Ὀρφέα καὶ Πρωναπίδην τὸν Ὀμήρου διδάσκαλον, εὐφυνῇ γεγονότα μελοποιούν· πρὸς δὲ τούτοις Θυμοίτην τὸν Θυμοῖτου τοῦ Λαομέδοντος, κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν γεγονότα τὴν Ὀρφέως, <ὄν> πλανηθῆναι κατὰ πολλοὺς τόπους τῆς οἰκουμένης, καὶ παραβαλεῖν τῆς Λιβύης εἰς τὴν πρὸς ἑσπέραν χώραν [τῆς οἰκουμένης] ἕως ὠκεανοῦ, θεάσασθαι δὲ καὶ τὴν Νύσαν, ἐν ᾗ μυθολογοῦσιν οἱ ἐγχώριοι [ἄρχαιοι] τραφῆναι τὸν Διόνυσον, καὶ τὰς κατὰ μέρος τοῦ θεοῦ τούτου πράξεις μαθόντα παρὰ τῶν Νυσσέων συντάξασθαι τὴν Φρυγίαν ὀνομαζομένην πόλιν, ἀρχαίκοις τῇ τε διαλέκτῳ καὶ τοῖς γράμμασι χρῆσάμενον.

He says then that among the Greeks **Linus** was the first to discover the rhythms and song, and when **Cadmus** brought from Phoenicia the letters, as they are called, **Linus** was again the first to transfer them into the Greek language, to give a name to each character, and to fix its shape. Now the letters, as a group, are called 'Phoenician' because they were brought to the Greeks from the Phoenicians, but as single letters the **Pelasgians** were the first to make use of the transferred characters and so they were called 'Pelasgic.' [2. Linus also, who was admired because of his poetry and singing, had many pupils . . . 4 About Orpheus, the third pupil, we shall give a detailed account when we come to treat of his deeds.] Now Linus, they say, composed an account in Pelasgic letters of the deeds of the first Dionysus and of the other mythical legends and left them among his memoirs. 5 And in the same manner use was made of these Pelasgic letters by **Orpheus** and **Pronapides**, who was the teacher of Homer and a gifted writer of songs; and also by **Thymoetes**, the son of Thymoetes, the son of Laomedon, who lived at the same time as Orpheus, wandered over many regions of the inhabited world, and advanced into the western part of Africa as far as the ocean. He also visited Nysa, where the ancient natives of the city relate that Dionysus was reared, and, after he had learned from the Nysaeans of the deeds of this god in all detail, he composed the 'Phrygian poem', as it is called, in which he made use of both archaic language and letters. (Trans. Oldfather slightly modified)

4. Diodorus Siculus 5. 57:

οἱ δ' Ἡλιάδαι διάφοροι γεννηθέντες τῶν ἄλλων ἐν παιδείᾳ διήνεγκαν καὶ μάλιστα' ἐν ἀστρολογίᾳ. . . . τούτων δὲ Μάκαρ μὲν εἰς Λέσβον ἀφίκετο, Κάνδαλος δὲ εἰς τὴν Κώ· Ἀκτὶς δ' εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἀπάρas ἔκτισε τὴν Ἡλιούπολιν ὀνομαζομένην, ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς θέμενος τὴν προσηγορίαν· οἱ δ' Αἰγύπτιοι ἔμαθον παρ' αὐτοῦ τὰ περὶ τὴν ἀστρολογίαν θεωρήματα. (3) ὕστερον δὲ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι γενομένου κατακλυσμοῦ, καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐπομβρίαν τῶν πλείστων ἀνθρώπων ἀπολομένων, ὁμοίως τούτοις καὶ τὰ διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων ὑπομνήματα συνέβη φθαρῆναι. (4) δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι καιρὸν εὐθετον λαβόντες ἐξειδιopoῦσαντο τὰ περὶ τῆς ἀστρολογίας, καὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων διὰ τὴν ἀγνοίαν μηκέτι τῶν γραμμάτων ἀντιποιουμένων ἐνίσχυσεν, ὥς αὐτοὶ πρώτοι τὴν τῶν ἀστρον εὔρεσιν ἐποιήσαντο. (5) ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι κτίσαντες ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ πόλιν τὴν ὀνομαζομένην Σάν, τῆς ὁμοίας ἐτυχον ἀγνοίας διὰ τὸν κατακλυσμόν. δι' ἧς αἰτίας πολλαὶς ὕστερον γενεαῖς Κάδμος ὁ Ἀγήνορος ἐκ τῆς Φοινίκης πρῶτος ὑπελήφθη κομίσαι γράμματα εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα· καὶ ἀπ' ἐκείνου τὸ λοιπὸν οἱ Ἑλληνες ἔδοξαν αἰεὶ τι προσευρίσκειν περὶ τῶν γραμμάτων, κοινῇ τινος ἀγνοίας κατεχούσης τοὺς Ἑλλήνας.

The Heliadae, having shown themselves superior to all other men, likewise excelled in learning and especially in astrology; . . . Of their number Macar came to Lesbos, and Candalus to Cos; and Actis, sailing off to Egypt, founded there the city called Heliopolis, naming it after his father; and it was from him that the Egyptians learned the laws of

astrology. 3 But when at a later time there came a **flood** among the Greeks and the majority of mankind perished because of the abundance of rain, it happened that **all written monuments were also destroyed** in the same manner as mankind; 4 and this is the reason why the Egyptians, seizing the favourable occasion, appropriated to themselves the knowledge of astrology, and why, since the Greeks, because of their ignorance, no longer laid any claim to writing, the belief prevailed that the Egyptians were the first men to effect the discovery of the stars. 5 Likewise the Athenians, although they were the founders of the city in Egypt men call Saïs, suffered from the same ignorance because of the flood. And it was because of reasons such as these that many generations later men supposed that **Cadmus, the son of Agenor**, had been the first to bring the letters from Phoenicia to Greece; and after the time of Cadmus onwards the Greeks were believed to have kept making new discoveries in the science of writing, since a sort of general ignorance of the facts possessed the Greeks. (Trans. Oldfather slightly modified)

5. Diodorus Siculus 5. 74. 1:

ταῖς δὲ Μούσαις δοθῆναι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς τὴν τῶν γραμμάτων εὗρεσιν καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐπῶν σύνθεσιν τὴν προσαγορευομένην ποιητικὴν. πρὸς δὲ τοὺς λέγοντας ὅτι Σύροι μὲν εὕρεται τῶν γραμμάτων εἰσί, παρὰ δὲ τούτων Φοίνικες μαθόντες τοῖς Ἕλλησι παραδεδώκασιν, οὗτοι δ' εἰσὶν οἱ μετὰ Κάδμου πλεύσαντες εἰς τὴν Εὐρώπην, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τοὺς Ἕλληνας τὰ γράμματα Φοινίκηα προσαγορεύειν, φασὶ τοὺς Φοίνικας οὐκ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εὕρεῖν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς τύπους τῶν γραμμάτων μεταθεῖναι μόνον, καὶ τῇ τε γραφῇ ταύτῃ τοὺς πλείστους τῶν ἀνθρώπων χρῆσασθαι καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τυχεῖν τῆς προειρημένης προσηγορίας.

To the **Muses** it was given by their father (Zeus) to discover the letters and to combine words in the way which is designated poetry. And in reply to those who say that the **Syrians** are the discoverers of the letters, that the **Phoenicians** having learned them from the Syrians passed them on to the Greeks, and that these Phoenicians are those who sailed to Europe together with **Cadmus** and this is the reason why the Greeks call the letters 'Phoenician', they say that the Phoenicians were not the first to make this discovery, but that they only changed the forms of the letters, and the majority of mankind made use of that way of writing them, and so the letters received the designation mentioned above. (Trans. Oldfather modified)

6. Pliny, NH 7. 192–3:

Litteras semper arbitror Assyrias fuisse, sed alii apud Aegyptios a Mercurio, ut Gellius, alii apud Syros repertas volunt, utrique in Graeciam attulisse e Phoenice Cadmum sedecim numero, quibus Troiano bello Palameden adiecisse quattuor hac figura ΖΨΞΧ, totidem post eum Simoniden melicum ΨΞΩΘ, quarum omnium vis in nostris recognoscitur. Aristoteles decem et octo priscas fuisse et duas ab Epicharmo additas ΡΖ quam a Palamede mavult. 193 Anticlides in Aegypto invenisse quendam nomine Menen tradit, XV annorum ante Phoronea, antiquissimum Graeciae regem, idque monumentis adprobare conatur. e diverso Epigenes apud Babylonios ΔCCXX annorum observationes siderum coctilibus laterculis inscriptas docet, gravis auctor in primis; qui minimum, Berosus et Critodemus, CCCCXC, ex quo apparet aeternus litterarum usus. in Latium eas attulerunt Pelasgi.

I have always been of the opinion that the letters were of **Assyrian** origin, but other writers, such as Gellius for instance, suppose that they were invented in **Egypt** by **Mercury**: others will have it that they were discovered by the **Syrians**; and both that **Cadmus** brought from Phoenicia sixteen letters into Greece. To these, **Palamedes**, it is said, at the time of the Trojan war, added these four, θ, ξ, φ, and χ. **Simonides**, the lyric poet, afterwards added the same number, ζ, η, ψ, and ω; the sounds denoted by all of which are now received into our alphabet. Aristotle, however, is rather of the opinion that there were originally eighteen letters, α β γ δ ε ζ ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ σ τ υ φ, and that two, θ namely and χ, were introduced by **Epicharmus**, and not by Palamedes. Anticlides says that a certain **Menes**, in Egypt, invented

the letters fifteen years before the reign of Phoroneus, the most ancient of all the kings of Greece, and this he attempts to prove by the monuments. On the other hand, Epigenes, a writer of very great authority, informs us that the Babylonians have a series of observations on the stars, for a period of seven hundred and twenty thousand years, inscribed on baked bricks. Berosus and Critodemus, who make the period the shortest, give it as four hundred and ninety thousand years. From this statement, it would appear that letters have been in use from all eternity. The Pelasgi were the first to introduce them into Latium.

7. Lucian, *Consonantium lis*, 5. 3:

καὶ ὁ γε πρῶτος ἡμῖν τοὺς νόμους τούτους διατυπώσας, εἴτε Κάδμος ὁ νησιώτης εἴτε Παλαμήδης ὁ Ναυπλίου—καὶ Σιμωνίδη δὲ ἔνιοι προσάπτουσι τὴν προμήθειαν ταύτην—οὐ τῇ τάξει μόνον, καθ' ἣν αἱ προεδρίαι βεβαιοῦνται, διώρισαν, τί πρῶτον ἔσται ἢ δεύτερον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιότητος, ἧς ἕκαστον ἡμῶν ἔχει, καὶ δυνάμεις συνείδον.

Now the first who shaped for us these laws, either Cadmus the islander or Palamedes, son of Nauplius, or also Simonides, whom some credit with the measure, did not merely determine our order of precedence in the alphabet, which should be first or second; they also had an eye to our individual qualities and faculties.

APPENDIX 3

Official Letters Sent by Greek Poleis or *Koina* and Inscribed on Stone, in Chronological Order

The list stops at the beginning of our era. Note that covering letters have normal (non-highlighted) numbers; letters transmitting information or a request are numbered in italics; letters that in and of themselves conveyed a decision are numbered in bold; the five Cretan 'letter-decrees' are grouped as nos. 70–4. I have underlined the numbers corresponding to those letters whose prescript or conclusion is fragmentary or lost, since this implies uncertainty as to the exact formal presentation of the document. Sender and place of inscription are in bold, as is the date. A list of seventy-one letters sent by Roman magistrates in the same period of time is given separately; I have not added references to mentions of letters in inscriptions. For both Greek and Roman letters, bibliographical references have been kept to a minimum.

1. Letter of the magistrates and city of **Istron** to the Coans concerning the *asylia*, inscribed in **Cos**, 242 BC.

Rigsby and Hallof 2001: 335–8, no. 2 (SEG 51, 1056) = IG xii 4,1 214, A ll. 1–13.

ll. 1–3: the *kosmoi* and the city of Istron greet the council (or, the magistrates? the text is restored; see below, no. 2) and the people of Cos; the greeting is followed by a narrative, with first person plural, 'you have sent to us' ([Τσ]τρων[ίων οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Κωῶν τὰ βωλᾶι καὶ τῶι] | δάμωι χαίρειν· ἀπεστή[λατε παρ' ἡμῆς θεωροὺς Χά]- | ριππον, Δίωνα, Πλάτωνα, [οἱ ἐπήγγειλαν . . .]); the decision comes at ll. 6–7 in the forms typical of a decree: ἀγαθὰ τύχαι· | δεδόχθαι τῇ πόλει τᾶ[ι Τστρονίων δέχεσθαι (and other infinitives); at ll. 11–12 the prescription to inscribe the decision in the prytaneum of Istron labels the document with psephisma (τὸ δὲ ψάφισμα τὸδε ἀναγράφαι ἐν τῶι] | πρυτανείῳ ννν, cf. no. 2 below); there are no final greetings (the text closes on the indemnity to be given to the *theoroi*, l. 13). Another letter (no. 2) is inscribed directly underneath.

2. Letter of the *kosmoi* and the city of **Phaistos** to the Coans concerning the *asylia*, inscribed in **Cos**, 242 BC. Inscribed under the preceding letter (and followed by a decree of Hierapytna).

Rigsby and Hallof 2001: 335–8, no. 2 (SEG 51, 1056) = IG xii 4,1 214, A: ll. 14–18, B: ll. 19–24.

ll. 14–16: the *kosmoi* and the city of Phaistos greet the magistrates (or the council? The text is restored; see above, no. 1) and the city of Cos; the greeting is followed by the motivation, introduced with ἐπεὶ (Φαιστιῶν οἱ κόσμοι καὶ [ἡ πόλις Κωῶν τοῖς ἀρχουσι] | καὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρειν· ἐπ[εὶ Κῶιοι ἀποστείλαντες θεῶ]- | [ροῦ]ς τάν τε ἀσυλ[ίαν . . .]) The decision comes on the back of the stele, B ll. 2–3, with invocation of good fortune, followed by infinitives (ἀγαθὰ τύχαι· ᾗ[μεν] . . .). At ll. 4–5, in the context of the decision to inscribe the document (in Phaistos, in the Pythion), the text is defined psephisma (τὸ δὲ ψάφισμα | [τὸδε ἀναγράφαι ἐν τῷ ἱερῶι τῷ Ἀπόλλωνος τῷ Πυθίῳ]). There is no final greeting, the text closes on the indemnity for the *theoroi*. On B l. 7 begins a decree of the Hierapytnians, on the same topic, expressed in the traditional format: [ἔδοξεν Ἱεραπυτνίων τοῖς κόσμ]οις καὶ τῷ δάμωι· ἐπ[ε]ι[·]- | [δῆ] Κῶιοι φίλοι ὄντες τῷ δάμ]ω τῷ Ἱεραπυτνίῳ<ν> . . . , B ll. 7–8.

3. Letter of the **Thessalonikeis** to the Delians, followed by decree, inscribed in **Delos**, c.230 BC.

IG xi 4, 1053 = IG x 2, 1, 1028 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 191).

ll. 1–19: Delian decree for the Macedonian Admetus; ll. 20–45: another Delian decree for Admetus, adding the exhortation to send an envoy to the Thessalonikeis to have the honours registered there as well (respectively IG xi 4 664 and 665); ll. 46–54 letter, beginning with: ἡ πόλις Θεσσαλονικέων Δηλίων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ | τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν; genitive absolutes describe the arrival of the envoy and the accomplishment of his duties, then an aorist and a perfect mark the acceptance and the sending of a copy of the decree to the Delians, so that they may know that their requests have been accepted (προσεδεξάμεθα καὶ | (. . .) πεπόμφαμεν ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντίγραφον ὅπως εἰδήτε); this is directly followed, at ll. 55–77, by the decree of the Thessalonikeis (no concluding formula for the letter).

4. Letter (beginning fragmentary; but at l. 12 εὐτυχεῖτε) transmitting a decision of **Lappa** (Crete) to Tenos, inscribed in **Tenos**, second half of the third century BC.

IG xii, 5, 868A (IC 2 xvi 2 = Rigsby 1996, no. 59; cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 308).

At l. 5 Rigsby proposes to restore a δεδόχθαι, to signify the decision taken; his restorations imply a line-length considerably longer than that supposed by Hiller. That the letter conveyed a decision is clear, but it is impossible to say how exactly the decision was expressed.

5. Letter of the *kosmoi* and city of **Knossos** to the Coans concerning the doctor Hermias son of Emmenidas, inscribed in **Cos**, 221–219 BC.

IC 1 viii 7, Syll.³ 528, Samama 2003: 127 (with date 219–217 BC); IG xii 4, 1 247 (Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 300).

Κνωσίων οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Κώων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δ- | ἄμῳ χαίρειν. ἐπειδὴ πρεσβευσάντων Γορτυνίων . . . The first twenty lines survive, but the text breaks off when still recounting the motivation.

6. Letter of **Gortyna** to the Coans concerning the same doctor, inscribed in **Cos**, 218 BC.

IC 4 168 = Laurenzi 1941, no. 3; Samama 2003: 126 (with date 219–217); IG xii 4, 1 248 (Rhodes and Lewis 1997: 302).

Γορτυνίων οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Κώων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τ- | ὧ δάμῳ χαίρειν. ἐπειδὴ . . . (a long motivation clause follows). At ll. 20–1 comes the decision, with βωλόμενοι αὐτῷ εὐ- | [χαρι]στήν, ἔδοξε τε ἡμῖν ἐπαινεῖσαι; the Coans are also praised at ll. 22–3 for having sent Hermias . . . The end is lost.

7. Letter of **Argos** to Magnesia on the Maeander, inscribed in **Magnesia**, 208 BC.

I. **Magnesia** 40 (Rigsby 1996, no. 90; cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 69).

Beginning partly lost. [- - Μαγνή]των τῇ βουλ[αῖ] | [καὶ τῷ δάμῳ χαίρειν. οἱ παρ' ὑ]μῶν πρεσβευταὶ καὶ | θεαροὶ παραγενόμενοι Φ]ιλίσκος Πυθαγόρου, Κόνων | [Διονυσίου, Λάμπετο]ς Πυθαγόρου τό τε ψάφισμα | 5 [ἀπέδωκαν τῷ δά]μῳ καὶ αὐτοὶ διελέγεν ἀκολου- | [θως τοῖς ἐν τῷ] ψαφίσματι κατακεχωρισμένοις πε- | [ρὶ τοῦ ἀγώνου]ς [τ]ῶν Λευκοφρυγῶν. ὑπογεγράφαμες οὖν | ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντίγραφον τοῦ ψαφίσματος τοῦ δοχθέντος | τῷ δάμῳ. ἔρρωσθε. The letter, addressed to the boule and demos of Magnesia on the Maeander, concerns the acceptance of the Leucophryena and honours for the Magnesian *theoroi*; it is followed (ll. 10–19) by a decree: πρεσβευτῶν παραγενομένων παρὰ τοῦ δάμου τῶμ | Μαγνήτων τῶν πρὸς τῷ Μαιάνδρῳ Φιλίσκου τοῦ | Πυθαγόρου, Κόνωνος τοῦ Διονυσίου, Λαμπέτου τοῦ | Πυθαγόρου καὶ ἀποδόντων τὸ ψάφισμα καὶ διαλεγέν- | τῶν ἀκολουθῶν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἔδοξε τῷ δά- | 15 μῳ συντελεῖν τὰν θυσίαν κοινὰ μετὰ τῶν

Ἀχαιῶν, | ἂν συντελεῖ ὁ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Μαγνήτων τῶμ πρὸς τῶι Μαι- | ἀνδρῶι τῆι Ἀρτέμιδι
τῆι Λευκοφρυγῇ, δοθῆμεν δὲ | παρὰ τῶν ταμιῶν καὶ ἐνεκέχειρα τοῖς ἐπαγγέλλονσι | ὅσον
καὶ τοῖς τὰ Νέμεα ἐπαγγέλλοσσι διδοται. Interestingly, the (unusually concise) decree has
no prescript: it may have been left out by the Magnesians, but it is then odd that they chose
to inscribe the covering letter. A dating formula was possibly at the beginning of the letter,
so that the covering letter was incorporated in the dossier.

8. Letter of **Knossos** to Magnesia on the Maeander (beginning lost), accompanying a
honorific decree by the Cnossians awarding *proxenia* and related honours to two
citizens of Magnesia (Il. 9–19), inscribed in **Magnesia, 208? BC**.

I. Magnesia 67; IC 1 viii 10 (Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 300, with date **third–second century BC**).

[- - κρ]ίνοντεν ἀξίους [- -] | [. c.19 τῶ]ν παρ' ἁμῖν τιμίῳν | [. c.22 . . .
.] ἁμῖν διασαφῆσα[ν]- | [τ - -]ων· ὑπογεγ[ρ]άφαμεν δὲ τῷ ψαφίσμα- | 5 [τος τὸ
ἀ]ντίγραφον· εὖ οὖν ποιήσετε ἀναγράψαν- | [τες ἐς τ]ὰν στωϊάν καὶ ὑμῖν· ἀνεγράψαμεν |
γὰ[ρ κ]αὶ ἁμῖν ἐν στάλῃ λιθίνοι καὶ ἐθήκαμεν | ἐν τῷ ἱερῶι τῷ Ἀπέλλωνος τῷ Δελφιδίῳ· |
ἐ[ρρω]σθε. | The decree began at l. 9 (ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀρχῆας κοσμιόντων τῶν σὺν Ζω- | 10 ἀρχοι
ἔδοξεν Κνωσί[ω]ν [τ]οῖς κόσ[μοις] καὶ | τῇ πόλει· Θιογείτονα Σίμω, Τοφ[ώντα] Το]- | φώντος
Μάγνητας ἀπὸ Μαιάνδρῳ π[ρο]ξένους | ἦμεν καὶ εὐεργέτας), and went on until l. 21, where
the stone breaks off, so that the details of the request for inscription cannot be known.

- 9–10. Letter of the magistrates and *synhedroi* of the **Aitolians** to the boule and demos
of **Xanthos** (Il. 79–88), and letter of the **Kytenians** to the boule and demos of **Xanthos**
(Il. 88–110). Before the letters, decree of Xanthos (Il. 1–72), taken as an answer to the
requests (and mentioning the letters with the requests at Il. 10, 12–13, 67–9), and decree
of the Aitolians (Il. 73–9). Inscribed in **Xanthos, 206/205 BC**.

SEG 38, 1476, C and D (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 141, 153, 441).

Letter of the Aitolians, Il. 79–88: Ἀγέλαος, Πανταλέ- | ων, Μόλοσος καὶ οἱ σύνεδροι τῶν
Αἰτωλῶν Ξανθίων τῆι βου- | λῇ καὶ τῶι δάμῳ χαίρειν. Α[α]μπρίας, Αἵντος, Φηγεύς, οἱ
ἀπο- | δεδωκότες ὑμῖν τὰν ἐπιστολάν, ἐντὶ μὲν Δωριεῖς. . . καλῶς οὖν ποιήσετε. . .
ἔρρωσθε, and letter of the Kytenians, Il. 88–91: Δωριέων τῶν ἀπὸ | Ματροπόλιος οἱ
πολὶν Κυτένιον οἰκόντες Ξανθίων τῆι βου- | λῇ καὶ τῶι δάμῳ χαίρειν· ἀπεστάλακαμες
ποθ' ὑμὲ πρέσ- | βεις. . . ; Il. 99–102: ἀξιάζομες οὖν ὑμὲ | μνασθέντας τὰς συγγενείας τὰς
ὑπαρχούσας ἁμῖν | ποθ' ὑμὲ μὴ περιδεῖν τὰμ μεγίσταν τὰν ἐν τῇ Ματροπόλ[ι] πό]- | λιν
Κυτένιον ἐξαλειφθεῖσαν, ἀλλὰ βοασθῆσαι. . . ; Il. 108–10: γινώσκετε δὲ οὐ μόνον ἁμῖν
εὐχαριστῆς ἐόντες ἀλλὰ καὶ | [το]ῖς Αἰτωλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Δωριεῖσι πᾶσι καὶ μάλιστα
βασίλει | Π[το]λεμαίῳ διὰ τὸ συγγενῇ ἁμῶν εἶμεν κατὰ τοὺς βασιλεῖς. There is no closing
greeting formula.

11. Letter of **Sybrita** (Crete) to the Teians, inscribed in **Teos, 201 BC**.

IC 2 xxvi 1 (Rigsby 1996, no. 141; cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 307, with date 204–202 BC).

Συβριτίων ἡ πόλις καὶ οἱ κόσμοι Τηίων τῆι βουλῇ καὶ τῶι | δάμῳ χαίρειν (they go on to
mention first Perdikkas, the envoy of Philip V, and then the Teian ambassadors; the central
part is very fragmentary, and at l. 21 the decisions taken are referred to with *παρὰ τὸ γραφέν*
δόγμα); the text closes with *εὐτυχεῖτε* (l. 27).

12. Letter of **Polyrrhenia** to the Teians for *asylia*, inscribed in **Teos, 201 BC**.

IC 2 xxiii 3 (Rigsby 1996, no. 137; cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 307, with date 204–202 BC).

Πολυρρηγίων | Πολυρρηγίων οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Τηίων τῶι δάμῳ | καὶ τῆι βουλῇ
χαίρειν. Then, a sentence with verb in first person plural; decision: δεδό- | χθαι
Πολυρρηγίων τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ τῇ πόλει· ἀποκρίνεσ- | θαι (Il. 7–9); conclusion: ἔρρωσθε
(l. 13).

13. Letter of **Kydonia** to the Teians, inscribed in **Teos, 201 BC**.

IC 2 x 2 (Rigsby 1996, no. 139; cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 301, with date 204–202 BC).

Κυδωνιατῶν. | Κυδωνιατῶν ἡ πόλις καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες Τηίων τῇ βουλῇ | καὶ τῷ δάμῳ χαίρειν. ἔπειδ' [Τή]οι φίλοι καὶ συγγενεῖς | ὑπάρχοντες διὰ προγόνων... (motivation clause) ... ἀποκρίνασθαι διότι (l. 16) ... (decision) ... ἔρρωσθε (l. 27).

14. Letter (? beginning missing; at the end, l. 11, *ἔρρωσθε*) of **Hierapytna** to the Teians, inscribed in **Teos, 201 BC**.

IC 3 iii 2 (Rigsby 1996, no. 144).

15. Letter of the **Thebans** to Polyrrhenia, inscribed in **Polyrrhenia, end third–beginning second century BC**.

IC 2 xxiii 1 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 119, 307).

Θηβαίων | [οἱ] Θηβαίων πολέμαρχοι καὶ οἱ σύνεδροι Π[ολυ]ρ[ρ]ηνίων τοῖς κόσμοις κ[α]ὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρ[ειν] | [τοῦ] παρ' ἡμῖν ψηφίσματος τοῖς ἀποστα[λεί]- | [σι π]αρ' ὑμῶν ὑπογεγράφαμεν ὑμῖν τὸ <ἀντίγραφον> ... The beginning of the Theban decree follows.

16. Letter of **Axos** in Crete to the Aetolians, inscribed in **Delphi, 200–170 BC**, with the corresponding decree of the Aetolians.

IC 2 v 19 = *Syll.*³ 622, B (Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 153, 300).

*φαξίων οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Αἰτωλῶ[ν συνέδροις] καὶ τῷ στρα- | ταγῷ καὶ τῷ ἱππάρχῳ χαίρειν. γινώσκετε ... (information concerning Epikles, followed by request) ... ll. 10–13: καλῶς ὦν ποιησεῖτε φροντίδ- | δοντες ὅπαι ... There is no concluding formula. This is neither a covering letter, nor a letter-decree: the Axians are informing the Aetolians of the situation of their citizen Epikles, requesting that if someone tries to harm him and his family he may be prevented, on the common and on the private level (*koina* and *idia*), and that the agreement of common citizenship may remain forever (ἡ δὲ κοινοπολι[τείας] αἰδία ὑπάρχη ἀν[αγραφά]).*

17. Letter of an unknown city (Cnidus?) to Bargylia, probably from **Bargylia, beginning second century BC**.

I. Iasos 606 (Rigsby 1996, no. 174; cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 327, 329).

[- - ἄρχον]τες Βαργυλιατῶν τῇ πόλει [χαίρειν] | [- - ἀπ]εστάλκαμες ποθ' ὑμέ το[- -] | ... (the following text, fragmentary, concerns ambassadors, asyilia, an *agon*, *thearodokoi*, and inscription on stone) ... l. 17 *ἔρρωσθε*. After the letter on the stone is a decree, either by Bargylia or by another city, ll. 18–29; but as Rigsby 1996: 355 points out, the letter is not an accompanying cover for the decree that follows it.

18–19. Group of four documents, of which two are letters, inscribed in **Magnesia, 194/193 BC**.

I. *Magnesia* 91 = *IG* ix² 1 187, 13 ff. (*Syll.*³ 598; McCabe *Magnesia* 119 and 120; Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 153).

(a) Honorific decree of the Amphictions for Sosikles son of Diokles.

(b) Letter of the **Delphians**, accompanying and explaining the preceding decree (ll. 1–2: [οἱ ἄρχοντες Δ]ελφῶν καὶ ἡ πόλις Μαγνητῶν τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δάμῳ | [χαίρειν γ]ινώσκετε, cf. ll. 7–8: [καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐ]- | [κρίναμες] ὑμῖν γράφαι περὶ αὐτοῦ. *ἔ[ρρωσθε]*).

(c) Honorific decree of the Aetolians for Sosikles and Aristodamos sons of Diokles of Magnesia.

- (d) Letter of the *strategos* of the *Aetolians* Dikaiarchos to the boule and demos of Magnesia on the Maeander, probably again praising Diokles (*Παρά τοῦ στρατηγοῦ τῶν Αἰτωλῶν*). | *Δικαί[α]ρχος Μαγνη[ή]των τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δάμῳ χαίρειν*. [...], closing with a restored [*ἔρρω*]- | [*σθε*].

20. Letter of the archons, *synhedroi*, and *koinon* of the *Epeirotai* to the Rhodian commander of the League of the Nesiotai in Tenos (?), followed by decree, inscribed in **Tenos, c.200 (192?) BC**.

SEG 37, 709; SEG 40, 690 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 183).

Ἀπειρωτῶν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ οἱ σύνεδροι καὶ τὸ κοινὸν Ο... Ν... ΙΣΑΡΧ- | [*ω*]ι χαίρειν· *Χάροφ* ὁ ἀποσταλὲς ἀρχιθέωρος (followed by four lines, after which the text, concerning the Dodonean *Naia*, becomes illegible). It is impossible to tell whether there was a final salutation. At ll. 9–10 the decree resulting from Charops' embassy was mentioned ([*ὑπογεγρά*]- | [*φα*]μες δὲ ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ ψήφισμα ὃ ἐψήφισαντο?); it is thus clear that this was (mainly) a covering letter. The decree (basically lost) followed after a *vacat*, from l. 14 onwards.

21. Letter of **Chyretiai** in Perrhaebia to **Oloosson**, also part of the *koinon* of the Perrhaebii (ll. 1–11), followed by a honorific decree of Chyretiai (ll. 11–43), **190 BC**.

Archaiologike Ephemeris, 1917, p. 10 n. 304 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 166).

[*Χυρετιῶν*] οἱ τ[α]γο[ι] κ[α]ι ἡ πόλις Ὀλοσσο[ν]- | [*ων τοῖς ταγ*]οῖς κα[ι] τῇ πόλει χα[ί]ρειν· ἀπεστ[ά]- | [*καμ*]εν π[ρ]ὸς ὑμᾶς πρεσ[β]ευ[τά]ς... (names)... | 5 τοὺς ἀποδύσαντ[α]ς ὑμῖν, ἂς [τὸ ψ]ήφισμα ἐ- | [*χει τιμ*]ᾶς Ἐπίνω Σ[ω]π[α]ρ[ου]... ἔρρωσθε.

22. Letter of **Amphissa** to Skarphaea (in Opuntian Locris), inscribed in **Amphissa, 200–150 BC**, followed by a decree.

IG ix 1² 3, 750 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 146 and 148).

After three fragmentary lines (the end of another document) we read: *vac ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ vac* | 5 *Ἀμφισσέων* [οἱ ἄρ]χοντες καὶ ἡ πόλις Σκαρφέων τοῖς ἀρχόντ[οις] | [*καὶ τῇ βουλῇ*] καὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρειν· τῶν δεδομένων τιμῶν ὑπὸ | [*τᾶς*] πόλ[ι]ο[ς] ἀμῶν Μηνοφάντῳ Ἀρτεμιδώρου Μακεδόνι Ὑρκανίῳ | [*τὸ ἀ*]ντίγραφον ἐξαπεστάλκαμεν ποτὶ τὰν ὑμετέραν πόλιν, | [*καθάπερ*] καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Μηνόφαντος ἀμὲ παρεκάλεσε. Then, the text moves to a decree, the only marker being a dating formula, and the term *nomographon* to indicate the decision: *μηνὸς Ἀμ[ω]-* | 10 [*νο*]ς [ἐ]κτα ἐπ' εἰκάδι. νομογράφων· ἐπειδὴ Μηνόφαντος Ἀρτεμιδ[ω]- | [*ρου*] Μακεδὼν Ὑρκάνιος ἱατρὸς μεταπεμφθεὶς ὑπὸ τᾶς πόλιο[ς]... The resolution formula appears at l. 24: *δεδοχθαι τῷ δάμῳ ἐπαινεῖσαι τε αὐτὸν*... Then, there are instructions for sending copies of the text to Skarphaea and Opous, and from ll. 29 to 33 a short summary of the honours awarded to Menophantos. There is no concluding formula.

23. Letter of the prytanis and the demos of **Byllis** (Illyria) to Sparta, inscribed in **Sparta, beginning second century BC**.

IG v i 28 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 81 and 185).

Βυλλιώνων ὁ πρύτα- | [*νις κ(αι)*] ὁ δ[ι]ήμ[ο]ς Λακεδαι[ο]ν- | [*μ(ονίω)ν*] δῆμῳ χαίρειν· [ἀπ]- | [*εστάλκ*]αμε[ν] τιμῶν τω[ν] | π[ρ]ὸς ἡμῶν ἀντίγραφον... The rest is lost.

24. Letter of the *kosmoi* and the polis of **Allaria** in Crete to the boule and the demos of **Paros**, together with a Parian decree, inscribed in **Allaria, beginning second century BC**.

IC 2 i 2 B (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 299).

The story begins with messengers from Paros bringing a decree to Allaria (A); the letter follows: *Ἀλλαιριωτῶν οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Παρίων τῇ βουλῇ | καὶ τῷ δάμῳ χαίρειν*.

παραγενομένων τῶν πρεσβευ- | τῶν ποτ' ἀμέ, with a narrative in genitive absolutes that ends in the resolution formula: ἀγαθῶι τύχαι δεδόχθαι Ἀλλαριωτῶν | τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ τῇ πόλει (Il. 9–10); this is followed by decisions in the infinitive (which include inscribing the text in the two cities, if there is agreement, 19–25: ἐὰν <δὲ> | συνδοκεῖ ταῦτα τῷ δάμῳ τῷ Παρίων, ἀναγρα- | ψάντων αἱ πόλεις ἀμφοτέραι ἐς στάλαν λιθίναν | καὶ ἀνθέντων Πάριοι μὲν ἐς τὸ ἱερὸν τὰς Δάματρος, | Ἀλλαριώται δὲ ἐς τὸ ἱερὸν τῷ {ι} Ἀπόλλωνος. ταῦ- | τα δὲ εἶναι ἐφ' ὑγιείαι καὶ σωτηρίαι τῶν πόλεων | ἀμφοτερῶν.) The letter closes at Il. 25–6: ἐὰν δέ τι φαίνεται ὑμῖν προσθεῖναι | ἢ ἀφελαι, εὐχαριστώμες. Ἐρρωσθε.

25. Letter of the **Metropolitai** to the magistrates and the polis of Hypata (Il. 1–8), followed by a honorific decree for a doctor, inscribed in Hypata, 182–181 (IG ix) or 160–159 (Corrigenda) or 179–146 BC. (Wilhelm).

IG ix 2, 11; Wilhelm 1909: 146, 132; Samama 2003: 77 (differently Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 178, who do not follow Wilhelm's restoration and consider this a letter from an unknown city).

[M]ατροπολιτῶν οἱ τ' αἰγοὶ καὶ ἡ πόλις | [Ἵπαταίων το]ῖς ἀρχουσ[ι] καὶ τ[ῇ] πό- | λε[ι] χαίρειν. τ[ῶ]ν δεδομένων τι- | μῶν ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως ἡμῶν | 5 Γλαύκῳ Εὐδώρου τῷ ὑμετέ- | [ρω]ι πολέιτῃ ἀπεστάλκαμεν | ἥμε[ι]ς τὸ ἀντίγραφον, ἵνα εἰ- | δῇ[τε]. There are no closing greetings; the decree follows directly on the stone.

26. Letter of **Aptera** in Crete to the Teians, inscribed in Teos, 170 BC(?).

IC 2 iii 2 (Rigsby 1996, no. 154; cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 299)

Long letter (58 lines), referring to a previous decree (δόγμα, l. 14 and 54), of which the letter is an ἀνανέωσις, a renewal (Il. 54–5). Ἀπτεραίων | Ἀπτεραίων οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Τη- | ῶν τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δάμῳ χαίρειν... 25 διὸ καὶ δεδόχθαι τῷ δάμῳ | ἀποκρίνασθαι... ἔρρωσθε (l. 58). The earlier text is Rigsby 1996, no. 145 = IC 2 iii 1, dated to 201 BC; fragmentary both at the beginning and at the end, this text, known only from an eighteenth-century bad copy, is in part written in the first person plural (in l. 2: [ἀσπαζ]όμεθα καὶ [ἐ]παινώμεν; l. 4: [ἔνε]κεν ὧν καὶ παρ' ἀ[μῶν]; l. 6: περὶ[ἀξ]ομεν); the text we have ends with ἐψήφιστ[αι ἐπὶ κόσμων τῶν μετὰ] | Βορθίῳ, μηνὸς Δ[ι]κτ[υ]νναίῳ [- -], ll. 12–13. This might have been a letter too.

27. Letter of the **Athenian strategoi** to the *epimeletes* of Delos Charmides, followed by a *senatus consultum*, inscribed in Delos, post 164 BC.

I. Délos iv, 1510.

οἱ στρατηγοὶ Χαριμίδει ἐπιμελεῖν- | τεῖ Δήλου χαίρειν· γενομένων | πλειόνων λόγων ἐν τεῖ βουλῇ | περὶ (. . .), ἔδοξεν (. . .) · 10 γράψαι δὲ καὶ πρὸς σε (. . .) · 11–14 ὑποτε- | τάχαμεν δέ σοι καὶ τοῦ ἐνε- | χθέντος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δόγματος | τὸ ἀντίγραφον. (Followed by the *senatus consultum*.)

28. Letter of the *grammatophylax* of Sparta to Amphissa, followed by a decree of the polis, inscribed in Amphissa, mid-second century BC.

Rousset 2002a: 83–90 (SEG 52, 541).

ἀγαθῶι τύχαι | Λακεδαιμονίων γραμματοφύλ<α>ξ Πόλλις Ἐπιστράτου | ὁ ἐπὶ Ὀβρίμου Ἀμφισσέων ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρειν- | τῶν ὄντων παρ' ἀμὲ γραμμάτων ἐν τῷ δημοσίῳ ὑπο- | 5 γέγραφα ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντίγραφον. ν νομογράφων Δαμοκρά- | τῆς Λαφρίου νν Δημήτριον Μονίμου Ἀμφισσῇ πρόξενον | εἶμεν καὶ εὐεργέταν τῆς πόλεως αὐτὸν καὶ ἐκγόνουσ· ὑπάρχειν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ γὰς καὶ οἰκίας ἐνκτησιν καὶ ἀτέλεια[ν] | αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκγόνοις καὶ ἀσφάλειαν καὶ ἀσυλίαν καὶ τὰ λοι- | 10 πὰ τίμια ὅσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις προξένοις καὶ εὐεργέταις τῆς | πόλεως ὑπάρχει· ἔδοξε.

29. Letter of archons and polis of **Eretria** to the boule and demos of Cos, accompanying a honorific decree for Coan judges, inscribed in **Cos, mid-second century BC**.

IG xii 4, 1 169; Crowther 1999: 293 (SEG 49, 1116).

[Ἀρίστου?] τοῦ Ἀρίστου Φιλόφρονος τοῦ Τιμάρχου | [τοῦ Δαμ]οκλεῦς Παρμενίσκου τοῦ Τιμίδα | *three crowns* | [Ἐρετριέω]ν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ ἡ πόλις Κώϊων τῇ | [βουλῇ καὶ] τῷ δῆμῳ χαίρειν. τῶν ἐψηφισμέ- | 5 [νων ὑφ' ἡμ]ῶν τιμῶν τῷ τε δῆμῳ ὑμῶν καὶ | [τοῖς ἀποσ]ταλείσι δικασταῖς ἀπεστάλκα- | [μεν ὑμῖν ἀν]τίγραφον σφραγισάμενοι τῇ δημο- | [σίᾳ σφραγί]δι ἵνα παρακολουθῇτε. ἔρρωσθε. (ll. 1–8). The motivation clause of the decree follows immediately after a *vacat* (ll. 9–10: [ἐπειδὴ πεμ]ψάντων ἡμῶν ψήφισμα καὶ δικασ- | [ταγωγούς κ]αὶ πρεσβευτάς...), without any dating formula or other introduction.

30. Very fragmentary letter of the **Kerkyreis** to the Ambrakiotai, inscribed in **Kerkyra, mid-second century BC** (B, ll. 1–16), followed by the description of the boundaries of the Ambrakiotai (ll. 17–24) and of the Athamanes (25–33), and preceded, on the left side of the same stone, by a letter of P. Cornelius Blasio to the Kerkyreis with annexed *senatus consultum* (A, ll. 1–20, then break). The dossier concerned a territorial dispute between the Ambrakiotai and Atamanes.

IG ix 1² 4, 796B; SEG 47, 604; 49, 591bis.

κρίμα τὸ γ[ενόμενον περὶ χώρας Ἀθαμάσι καὶ Ἀμβρακιώταις] | Κορκυραίων οἱ ἄρχοντες - - Ἀμβρακιωτῶν τοῖς ἄρχουσι - - χαί- | ρειν. Σάτυρος Ἄνδρ[ο]μά[χου?, - - ἀποσταλάντες] | παρ' ὑμῶν ἀπέδωκαν ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ παρ' ὑμῶν ψάφισμα... At l. 17 Hallof proposes to recognize the beginning of the boundary description, and to restore a greeting formula before it: - - | νώσκετε ὅτι κατὰ τοὺς ΠΑΡΑ[- - - ἔρρωσθε.] | 17 Ἀμβρακιωτῶν περιάγῃσις [- -].

31. Letter(?) of the **Pharians** to the **Parians**.

SEG 23, 489 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 185 and 262).

Only the final part of the document is extant, without a concluding formula: ll. 1–2 [ὁ δεῖνα τοῦ δείνος, ὁ δεῖνα] Ζηλία ἀπεστάλη- | [σαν μετὰ γραμματέως - -]ου τοῦ Σκιουρίου, but its position makes it likely that it is indeed a covering letter. It is followed by a decree of the Pharians (ll. 3–21), one of the Parians (ll. 22–40 and B, ll. 1–22) and by an oracle of the god, all inscribed in **Pharos, mid-second century BC**.

32. Letter of the archons of **Elatea** to the Delphians, accompanying a manumission, **Delphi, c.150–130 BC**.

Fouilles de Delphes III 2: 120.

Ἐ[λατέων οἱ ἄρχ]οντες Δελ[φῶ]ν [το]ῖς ἀρχό[ντ]οις κ[αὶ] | τῷ πόλει χαίρειν. Γινώσκετε τὰν ποτεσφραγισμ[έ]ν- | ναν τῷ ἐπιστολίῳ ἀπελευθερίαν, ἀναγεγραμμένα[ν] | ἐν τῷ παρ' ἡμέ- | ἱερῷ τ<ῶ> ἐν Ἀσκληπιείῳ. ὑμεῖς οὖν εἰ ποι[ή]- | σετε, φροντίξαντες ὅπως καὶ παρ' ἡμέ- | ἀναγραφῇ ἂ ἀν- | τὰ ἀπελευθερώσις ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος | τοῦ Πυθίου. The manumission (ll. 8–26) and the names of the witnesses (ll. 26–8) followed.

- 33–35. Three letters, two from **Sicyon**, one from **Kerynia**, in a group of eleven as yet unpublished documents, from **Argos, post 146 BC**.

Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 69–70, 76, and 97.

The dossier comprises an Argive decree, followed by three letters of a consul (L. Mummius) to the Argives; then, a letter of the *synhedroi* of Sicyon to the Argives (Σικυονίων σύνεδροι ... Ἀργείων τοῖς ἄρχουσι χαίρειν), followed by a letter of L. Mummius to the Sicyonians and by a letter of the *grammateus* of the *synhedrion* of the Sicyonians to the Argive *damiorgoi* (Σικυονίων γραμματεὺς συνέδρων (...) Ἀργείων δαμιοργοῖς χαί[αί]ρειν); then, a letter of Kerynia in Achaia to Sicyon (Καρυνέων δαμιοργοὶ οἱ τὸ δεύτερον ἔτος (...))

Σικυονίων [τοῖς ἄρ]χοσι καὶ συνέδροις χαίρειν), one of Q. Fabius Maximus to Dyme, and at the end the decisions taken.

36. Letter of the archons and polis of **Delphi** to the Athenians acknowledging reception of a psephisma and honouring the Athenian demos (ll. 1–17), inscribed in **Delphi**, shortly after the mid-second century BC.

Fouilles de Delphes III 2: 94 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 131).

[οἱ ἄ]ρχοντες Δελφῶν καὶ ἡ πόλις Ἀθη[να]ίων τῇ βο[υλαὶ καὶ τῶι] δάμωι χαίρειν. This is followed by the content and then the resolution: οἱ παρ' ὑμ[ῶν] παραγενόμενοι ποθ' ἄμὲ πρεσβευταί (. . .) ἀπέδωκαν (. . .), διελέγησαν (. . .), ἐποιήσαντο (. . .) · ἐπαινέμεν (. . .) · δεδόχθαι οὖν (. . .). There is no concluding formula.

37–38. Letters of the **Gortynioi** (ll. 115–21) and of the **Hierapytnioi** (ll. 125–30), quoted in the context of the inscription preserving the decision of the judges of Magnesia on the Maeander (ll. 1–11) in the dispute opposing Hierapytna and Itanos. (The two parties, after an intervention of Ptolemy in favour of the Itanioi, asked the Romans, who suggested Magnesia as an arbiter.) The dossier is known through two copies, one very fragmentary from **Magnesia**, the other one from **Itanos** in Crete; it was inscribed in 112/111 BC, but the two letters are earlier (c.145 BC?).

IC 3 iv 9 (cf. the copy in Kern *I. Magnesia* 105).

I. 107: ἔγνωμεν γὰρ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου προστασίαν καὶ [κεκυρωμέν]ην παρὰ τοῦ κοιν[οῦ τῶν Κρηταίων] | [παρ' ὧ]ν ἔλαβον εὐδόκησιν καθότι τὸ παρατεθὲν ἡμῖν διάγραμμα [μα περι]εῖχεν, Ἰταν[ί]οις [Γορτύνιοι ἀπο]- | [στεί]λαντες (ἐ)πιστολὴν διεσάφησαν ὅτι ἐπὶ τὴν νῆσον αὐτῶν τὴν [καλου]μ[έ]νην Λεύκ[ην] Πραίσιοι μέλλουσιν | (. . .) 111 [Γο]ρτυνίων δὲ συνπαρόντων ἐπὶ τῆς κρίσεως Ἱεραπυτ[ν]ίοις, [παρετίθεν]το ἡμῖν Ἰτά[νιοι ἀποστα]- | [λείσαν] πρὸς ἐαυ[τ]οὺς πρότερον ὑπὸ Γορτυνίων ἐπιστολὴν, δι' ἧ[s] ἔ[κδη]λ[ο]ν ἄ[πασιν ἐγίνετο] ὅτι | [ἐπιμελῶς] προνοούμενοι Γορτύνιοι τοῦ κατὰ Ἰτανίους συμφέροντος ἐ[μὴν]υον αὐτο[ῖς] περὶ Πρα[ισ]ίων ὅτι | [περὶ τῇ]ν νῆσον αὐτῶν τὴν Λεύκην γίνονται ὡς κυριεύουσες. [. . .] τε ἡ ἐπιστολ[ὴ] καὶ ἀνεγράφη, γε- | 115 [νομῆης] ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀντιλογίας, ἐκρίναμεν δὲ καὶ αὐτῆς ἀντίγραφον καταχωρίσαι [τὸ ὑπογεγραμμένον] | (Here the letter begins, ll. 116–21) [Γορτυνίων οἱ κόρμοι καὶ ἡ πόλις Ἰτανίων τοῖς κόρμοις καὶ [τ]ῇ πόλ[ι] χαίρειν· πεπεισμέ[νοι] ὑπ' ἀνδρός τινος | [ὅς] δεδ[ι]ήλωκεν ὅτι οἱ Πραίσιοι οἰκονομόνται περὶ τὰς Λεύκας ὡς [ἐπιστ]ρατίας γενομ[έ]νας, κρατήσαι αὐ]- | [τὰς, τὰδε] ἐκρίναμεν ὑμῖν ἐπιμελῶς ἀποστείλαι· ὑμὲν ἄν καλῶς ποιή[σαιτε τ.]ς ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ [- - -] | [. .] ἐπ[ι] . .]σιν θέμ[ε] < > νῆι παρορυντέ< >ς τε > εἰ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ | ἐπιταδεῖω· γεγράφ[αμεν] οὖν ὑμῖν, οὐκ ὄν- | 120 των τούτων φίλων τῷ τε βασιλεῖ καὶ αὐτοῖς ὑμῖν, [δι]ὰ [πα]ντὸς ἐ[πιμε]λούμενοι κ[α]ὶ βω[λό]μενοι αἰεὶ - - | [.]ε[.]αι τῷ τε βασιλεῖ καὶ τοῖς τῷ βασιλέως φίλοις. (The allusion to Ptolemy Philometor dates the letter to before 145, year of the king's death; the Gortynioi had been favourable to the Itanioi, even though in 112 they sided with the Hierapytnioi). The stone continues with the second letter (ll. 125–30), sent by the Hierapytnioi: . . . 125 αὐτοὶ Ἰτανίοις τὴν ὑπογεγραμμένην ἐπιστολὴν· Ἱεραπυτνίων οἱ [κόσμοι κ]αὶ ἡ πόλις Ἰτανίων τοῖς | [κόσ]μοις καὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρειν· βέλτιον ὑπελάβομεν γράψαι ὑμῖν ὅπως εἰ διὰ [τὸ] σ[υ]μβεβηκὸς - - | 129 [. .] ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡμεῖς, εἴ τί κα συμβαίῃ τινὶ ὑμῶν τοιοῦτο ἐν τῇ ἀμ[ῇ] μ[η]θενὶ | ἐπιτρέφομεν. [ἔρρωσθ]ε.

39. Letter of the prytaneis and of the 'chosen for the *phylake*' of **Miletos** to the Eleans (ll. 29–40), in the context of a long document (seventy lines on two columns) concerning the arbitration between Sparta and the Messenians, inscribed in **Olympia** on the base dedicated by the Messenians, c.138 BC.

I.v. Olympia 52, ll. 29–40 = *Syll.*³ 683 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 94 and 375).

Μιλησίων οἱ πρυτάνεις καὶ οἱ ἡρημένοι ἐπὶ τῇ φυλακῇ | Ἑλείων τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τοῖς
 συνέδροις χαίρειν παρα- | γενομένωμ πρὸς ἡμᾶς πρεσβευτῶν παρὰ Μεσσηνίων | Μηνοδώρου
 τοῦ Διονυσίου, Φιλοΐτου τοῦ Κρατίου, καὶ | παρακαλούντων δοῦναι αὐτοῖς ἀντίγραφον πρὸς
 ὑ- | μᾶς τῆς γεγενημένης κρίσεως Μεσσηνίοις τε καὶ | Λακεδαιμονίοις κατὰ τὸ δόγμα τῆς
 συγκλήτου, καὶ τῆς τε | βουλῆς καὶ τοῦ δήμου συγχωρησάντων τὰ προδεδηλ[ω]μέ- | να καὶ
 ἐπιταξάντων ἡμῖν δοῦναι αὐτοῖς τὴν κρίσιν, ὑπο- | | [τ]άξαντες αὐτὴν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ ἐδώκαμεν
 τοῖς πρεσβευ- | [τ]αῖς, ὅπως διακομίσωσιν αὐτῇμ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐσφραγισμέ- | [νην] τῇ
 [δημ]οσίᾳ σφραγίδι. Cf. also ll. 11–12, where it is stated that the decision and the letters
 have been brought to Olympia by ambassadors of the Messenians, who asked that the
 documents be inscribed.

40–41. Letter of the *strategos* and the *grammateus* of the *synhedrion* of the **Magnetes** to
 the *demiourgoi* and the *demos* of Kleitor (the closing formula is lost, but was probably
 present), followed by a letter of the *strategoi* and *nomophylakes* of **Demetrias** to the
damiourgoi and *demos* of Kleitor. The entire dossier was inscribed in **Kleitor**, probably
 c.130 BC.

Peloponnesos, *IG* v 2, 367 = *IPark* 19 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 167 and 169, with
 reference to *SEG* 11, 1113 and date to c.160–150)

[Ζωίλ]ος στ[ρ]α[τη]γ[ὸ]ς Μαγν[ή]των καὶ Μει[δ]ί[ας] γραμ[μ]α[τ]εὺς συνεδρίου
 Κλειτορίων [το]ῖς δ[η]μοργοῖς καὶ τῶι δήμῳ χαίρειν. Δω]- | [ρόθεο]ν (... four lines of
 text...) [ἀ]πεστάλκα[μεν] δὲ ὑμῖν καὶ τοῦ ψηφί[σ]μα[τ]ος τ[ὸ] ἀντίγραφον τὸ
 ὑπογεγραμμένον. ἔρρωσθε] (ll. 1–6); it accompanied a decree of the Magnetes, ll. 7–23 (at
 l. 20 of the decree it was specified that Zoilos and Meidias should write to the cities of
 Kleitor, Patrae, and Demetrias); the letter of the *strategoi* and *nomophylakes* of Demetrias to
 Kleitor followed, at ll. 24–9 (Δη[μη]τριέω]ν οἱ στ[ρ]ατηγοὶ καὶ οἱ νομοφύ[λα]κες
 Κλειτορίων τοῖς δ[η]μοργοῖς καὶ τῶι δήμῳ χαίρειν. τὸν παρ' ὑμῶν] | 25 [ἀ]<π>οστ
 [αλέν]τα δικαστὴν γινώσκετε (... the text continue with praise of the judge and request of
 inscribing the honours voted for him on stone...) ἀπεστ[ά]λκαμεν δὲ ὑμ[ῖν] καὶ τοῦ
 ψηφίσματος τὸ ἀντίγραφον τὸ ὑπογεγραμμένον. ἔρρωσθε]), accompanying a decree of
 Demetrias, ll. 30–49 (here too at l. 46 it is specified that *strategoi* and *nomophylakes* will
 have to write to Kleitor and Patrae). Both the decrees of the Magnetes and of Demetrias
 allude to a letter sent previously (and not inscribed) with which they had asked for judges.

42. Letter of the *koinon* of the **Amphictions** to the Athenians concerning the Dionysiac
technitai (ll. 40–51), 134 or 130 BC, preceded by a decree of the Amphictions of 278
 BC (ll. 2–39), and followed by a new decree of the Amphictions (ll. 52–94) of 130 BC.
 Inscribed in **Athens**, 134 or 130 BC, in the theatre of Dionysos. The letter is,
 however, missing from the copy of the same decree inscribed in Delphi, and was
 probably also missing from the other copy inscribed in Athens, in the temenos of the
 Dionysiac *technitai*.

IG ii² 1132, ll. 40–51 = Le Guen 2001: TE 7 = *CID* 4 115. Note the archival docket 'from the
metroon': see Thomas 1989: 77 and n. 20; Sickinger 1994: 289–92.

ἐκ τοῦ μητρώιου· ἐπὶ Δημοστράτου [ἄρχοντος μηνὸς Βοη]- | δρομῶνος· τὸ κοινὸν τῶν
 Ἀμφικτιόων Ἀθηναίων τε | βουλεῖ καὶ τῶι δήμῳ χαίρειν· πρεσβευ[σάντων πρὸς ἡ]- |
 μᾶς. . . 50–51 ὑπογεγράφαμεν ὑμῖν τοῦ γ[εγενημένου] | ὑφ' ἡμῶν δόγματος τὸ ἀντίγραφον.

43. Letter of **Tyre** to Delphi, inscribed in **Delphi**, 125 BC.; probably brought there by
 ambassadors who came at the time when Tyre became independent to ask for recogni-
 tion of *asylia* from the Delphians for their city (or possibly better, following Rigsby 1996:
 483–4, to inform the Delphians of some event).

Pomtow, *Klio* 1918, 26, no. 49; *SEG* 2, 330; Curty 1995, no. 12; cf. Rigsby 1996: 483–4.

ll. 1–4: *Θεός. Τύχ[ην ἀγαθήν]. | Τύρου τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου ἡ β[ουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος Δελφῶν τῇ] | βουλῇ καὶ τῶι δῆμῳ τοῖς συγγεν[έσιν χαίρειν. (...) ἐπειδὴ ἐ]- | βουλόμεθα (...).* The text becomes more and more fragmentary, and after the twelfth line is altogether lost; at l. 10 we find an aorist, *ἐποιήσαμεν*, but that does not necessarily mean that we have already reached the decisions.

44. Letter of the *grammateus* of a Macedonian or Achaean polis (**Phenea?**) to Sparta, **Sparta, 123 or 121 BC.**

IG v i 30 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 81 and 90, with the restoration [*Φε*]νεατᾶν, and open date).

[*Φε*]νεατᾶν | [ὁ δεῖνα γρα]μματεὺς συνέ- | [δρων - - -]ς ὁ τὸ πέμπτον καὶ εἰ- | [κοστὸν ἔτος Λα]κεδαμονίων ἐφόροις | [καὶ ταῖ πόλει χα]ίρειν· τῶν δντων παρ' [ἐ]- | [μοὶ κεμένων ἐν] τῶι ἀρχεῖῳ ἐν βυβλίῳ | [ψηφισμάτων γέ]γραφα ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντί- | [γραφον· ἐπεὶ - -]κράτης Στεφά[νου] | [- - - - εὖ ποιῶ]ν διατε[λεί - -]

45. Letter (very fragmentary) of the *koinon* of the **Amphictions** to the Athenians concerning the *technitai*, following a slightly earlier decree of the Athenians, inscribed in **Athens**, on the acropolis, in **117–116 or 112 BC.**

IG ii² 1134, ll. 77–103 = Le Guen 2001, TE 12, E = CID 4, 120.

l. 77: [τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Ἀμφικτιόνων Ἀθηναίων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῶι] δῆμῳ χαίρειν . . . ; with this letter, the Delphians confirm an earlier decision (ll. 96–8: *ἐκρίναμε[ν τὰ κεχρημα]- | τισμένα ἐν τῇ μεθοπ[ωρινῇ πυλαίᾳ ἐπ]ὶ ἄρχοντος ἐν Δελφοῖς Ε[ὐκλείδου] | κύρια εἶναι καὶ βέβαια*); there is no closing formula.

46. Letter of the *koinon* of the **Amphictions** inserted in an Athenian decree (?), from the agora in **Athens, 117/116 BC.**

SEG 26, 117 (S. V. Tracy, *Hesperia* 45 (1976), 287–8 n. 3).

We have only ll. 1–5 (very fragmentary): ‘under the archonship of Menoitos, tribe Antiochis, [?] son of Attalos Berenikides was secretary’, 3ff.: *τετράδι ἱσταμένου τετάρτη | [τῆς πρυτανείας· βουλῇ ἐν βουλευτ]ηρίῳ· τῶν προέδρων ἐπεφύφι- | [ξεν - - c.14 - - καὶ συμπρό]εδροι vac. 3–4 τὸ κοιν[ὸν τῶν Ἀμφι]- | [κτιόνων Ἀθηναίων τῇ βουλῇ καὶ] τῶι δῆμῳ χαίρειν. [vac. c.4 - c.5 -]*

47. Letter (very fragmentary) of the *grammateus* of the *synhedrion* Xenon to the *stratego*i (ll. 17–21), preceded by a letter of a Roman magistrate(?) to the Karystians or Euboians, and followed by a *hypomnema*, from **Karystos, second century BC.**

IG xii 9, 5.

l. 2: [- -]ς ἐν τῇ ἐπισ[τ]ολεῖ[- -] ll. 14–15: [- -]τὸ ὑπόμνημα τὸ πε[ρὶ τούτων - -] | [- - κατα]μερίσατε εἰς τὰ παρ' ὑμε[ῖν δημόσια γράμματα] . . . ll. 17–19: [- -]Ξέ[ν]ων γραμματεὺς συνεδ[ρίου - -] | [- - στρατη]γ[οί]ς χαίρε[ω]. τῶν δντων π[αρ - -] | [ἡμῖν - - ὑμ]εῖν [τὸ ἀ]ντίγραφον [πεπο]μόφμεν . . .

48. Letter of an unknown city to Demetrias (ll. 13–19), followed by a decree (of which there are scant remains at l. 20) for judges sent by Demetrias; the whole was prefaced by a decree from Demetrias (ll. 1–12) in which it was decided to have the honours inscribed (so Wilhelm 1909). **Demetrias, II BC.**

Wilhelm, *Hermes* 40 (1909), 53–4 (revision of IG ix 2, 1106, where the text was interpreted as a decree of the Magnesites followed by a letter of the Magnesites to Demetria; thus Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 169).

ll. 13 ff. [- - -] as Δάμων - - - | [- Δημη]τριέων τοῖς [στρατηγοῖς καὶ] νο[μο]φύλαξιν καὶ τῶν δῆμῳ χαίρειν. τῶν τιμ[ῶν τῶν δεδομένῳ]ν [π]α- | [ρὰ - - Ζώλῳι Ἐπιτέλεο]ς Ἀρτεμιδώρῳι . . .

49. Letter of the ephors and the city of **Sparta** to the *tagoi* and demos of Larisa, **Larisa, second century BC.**

IG ix 2, 518.

[Α]κεδαιμονίων ἑφο[ρ]οι κα[ὶ] ἁ πόλι[s] | [Α]ριστ[α]ίων τοῖς ταγοῖς κ[αὶ] τῶν δ[α]- | [μῳι χαίρειν. ἀ] <π>εστάλακ<μ>εν π[ό]θ' ὑμέ | [πρέσβεις Ἀρισ]τόνικον Εὐαμερίο[ν] | 5 [- - -] ΙΟΣΑΡ[-] Δ[- - -] | [- - -] QIKII[-] ΙΟΥΑΙ[-] | [- - -] ΩΝΤΙΓΩΜΑ[- - -] The mention of envoys from Sparta being sent makes it likely that this is a covering letter.

50. Letter of an **unknown city** to Sparta (very fragmentary), **Sparta, second century BC.**

IG v i, 8 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 81).

[- - - οἱ σ]τραταγοὶ καὶ ἁ πόλις Λακεδαι- | [μονίων ἐφόροις κ]αὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρειν. πόθοδον | [ποιησαμένων π]οτί τε τὰν βουλ[ᾶν καὶ τὰ]ν ἐκκλη- | [σίαν ἀμῶν - - το]ῦ Λέοντος, Αἰσχρίωνος [τοῦ] Αἰσχροῦ | [νος τῶν ὑμετέρων] πολιτᾶν . . . Unclear whether this is a letter conveying a decision or simply a request.

- 51–52. Decision of the Amphictions (ll. 1–12) and letter of **Hypata** to the Amphictions concerning the designation of the *hieromnamon* of the Pythian years for Euboea (ll. 13–25), followed by an abstract of the earlier decisions (ll. 1–9, with at l. 5 the mention of a second letter sent by the Amphictions to the people of Hypata to ask them whether they consider that they should revise their decision), and by a new letter of **Hypata** to the Amphictions (ll. 9–28), inscribed in **Delphi, 110 BC?**

CID 4 121 and 122 = *Fouilles de Delphes* III 1: 578, resp. col. II, 14 ff. and col. I, 9 ff.

A prominent heading (ἐ[πιστολή] Ὑπαταί[ων], l. 13) and a standard epistolary opening are followed by the motivation clause (Ὑπαταίω[ν] οἱ ἄρχοντ[ες τῷ κοινῷ τῶν Ἀμφικτιόνων χαίρειν. ἐπειδὴ] (. . .), l. 14); the rest is very fragmentary. The second letter is quoted within the second record, without a separate heading (πάλιν ἐνί[κ]ησαν Χαλκιδεῖς καθότ[ι] καὶ ἡ γραφεῖσα ὑπὸ [τῶν Ὑπα]- | [ταίων ἀρχόντων περιέχει πρὸ]ς τοὺς Ἀμφικτιόνας ἐπιστολή. [Ὑπαταίω[ν] οἱ ἄρχοντ[ες] | 10 [καὶ ἁ πόλις τῷ κοινῷ τῶν] Ἀμφικτιόνων χαίρειν. ἐκομισάμεθά τε ἐπιστολὰ[ν] ἐν ᾧ [διδεσ]- | [φήσατε τὰ γεγρονότα καὶ παρεκάλεσ]ατε (. . .), ll. 9–12). Here too, the central part and end of the letter are lost.

53. Letter of someone to the magistrates and the people of Kyparissos, **Kyparissos, second–first century BC.**

Messenia, *SEG* 11, 1025; Sherk 1969, no. 46 (see list of letters by Roman magistrates, R25 *bis*).

[ἀγαθῇ] τύχη. | [ὁ δεῖνα - - - τῶν Κ]υπαρισσέων ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ | [πόλει] χαίρειν. | [- - -] ἀπολεχέσθαι ὑπ' ἐμοῦ τῇν | [- - -] ὡν ἐποιησάμην τῶν | [- - -] οὐ βαλανεῖου τοῦ . . . Because of the first person reference, it is unlikely to be a letter from a city; but the text is very uncertain.

54. Letter of the **Delphians** to the Athenians, inscribed in **Athens, 106–105 BC.**

IG ii² 1136, with addenda p. 672 = *Syll.*³ 711K.

Only the two last lines of the letter are preserved (Dittenberger restores three other lines before), accompanying a honorific decree for the priestess of Athena Chrysis (ll. 2–32). ll. 1–2: [. . . c.7 . . . Ἀθ]ηναίῳ τῷ [προ]ξένῳ τ[ὸ ἀντίγραφον] | [ὅπω]ς εἰδῇτε· νν ἔρρωσθε. ν ἐπειδὴ κτλ.

55. Letter of an unknown polis (Athens has been suggested) to the Delphians, inscribed in **Delphi, end second century BC.**

Fouilles de Delphes III 4: 33; *SEG* 3, 381.

Five small fragments of a document that went on for some 30 lines; it might be an Attic document sent to Delphi, over which someone might have added, in local dialect, [τύχ]αν [ἀγαθάν] | [ἐπὶ - - - ἄρχοντας, ἐ]πὶ τῇ[s - - - πρυτανείας - - -] | [- - - , Δελφῶν τῇ πό]λει χα[ίρειν - - -] | [- - παραγενομένων πρεσβ]ευτῶν [Il. 1-4].

56. In the dossier concerning a dispute between Thronion and Skarphaea, inscribed in **Delphi, end second-beginning first century BC**, letter with which the judges (Athenians? this part is in Attic dialect) transmit their decision and the entire dossier to the Amphictions.

CID 4 123-5 = *Fouilles de Delphes* III 4: 38, 3 = *Klio* XVI, no. 130, col. II; cf. Ager 1996, no. 167-I.

(Il. 17 ff.: [κριτὰς ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἐγ]νοντο σύμφωνοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, καὶ νενικηκότα[s] | [τοὺς Θροινείας κ]αὶ ἐ[ίλ]ηφότας ψήφους πεντήκοντα ἐννέα, τοὺς δὲ Σκ[αρ]- | [φέας ἐίληφόν]τας ψήφους [δ]ύο. [Γ]εγράφαμεν οὖν ὑμῖν, ἵνα εἰδῆτε· ὑπογ[ε]- | [γραπται δὲ] ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῆς ἀντιγραφῆς τῆς ἀποδοθείσης[s] | [ἡμῖν ὑπὸ τῶ]ν ἐξαποσταλέτων πρεσβευτῶν παρὰ τῆς πόλεως τῆς Θρο- | [νίων, ὁμο]ίως δὲ καὶ τῆς δοθείσης ἀντιγραφῆς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐξαποσταλέτων[v] | [πρεσβευτ]ῶν παρὰ τῆς πόλεως τῶν Σκαρφέων). The dossier contains Thronion's version of events, in the form of a kind of letter written in the first person, with epistolary deictics, and even an apostrophe to the other polis, but lacking introductory and final formulas (Il. 7-16: ἀμφιλλέγει ἡ πόλις τῶν Θροινίων | περὶ τὰς ἱερομαμοσύνας ποτὶ τὰν πόλιν τῶν Σκαρφέων. “ἐπιβάλλει μοι τὰς τῶ[v] | [Ἐπικν]αμίδιον Λοκρῶν ἀμφικτιονείας τὸ τρίτον μέρος, καθάπερ καὶ τὰ πρόβατα ἔ[v] | [τὰς θυ]σίας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τὰ νομιζόμενα πρότερον ἐν τοῖς Ἀμφικτιόνας συ[μ]- | [βέβλ]ημαι, καὶ καθ' ὃ κέκριμα πρότερον περὶ τούτων ἐν Ἀμφίσσαι κατὰ τὸ[v] | [ἀμ]φικτιονικὸν νόμον· καὶ δεῖ κρατεῖν ἐμὲ καὶ κυριεύειν τοῦ ἐμὶν ἐπιβά[λ]- | [λ]οντος μέρος, καὶ τὸν ἱερομαμόνα καθίστασθαι παρ' ἐμὲ καὶ πέμπε- | σθαι ὑπ' ἐμοῦ, ἐπεὶ κα ἐμὶν καθήκη ἡ ἱερομαμοσύνα. Τὸ δὲ πόλι Σκαρφέ- | ων, ἀντιποιεῖσαι κακοπραγμῶνως κατασοφίζομένα, καὶ ἐξειδιάξεσθαι[ι θε]- | λεις ἀδίκως τὸ ἐμὶν ἐπιβάλλον μέρος τὰς ἱερομαμοσύνας”). The dossier continues with Skarphaea's version, written in an indirect, impersonal and traditional style (Il. 17-22).

57. Letter of the *strategoi* of Lampsakos to the magistrates of Thasos (Il. 2-8), inscribed in the agora of Thasos, **first third of the first century BC**.

I. Lampsakos, no. 7 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 412).

Λαμβακηνῶν | Λαμβακηνῶν στρατηγοὶ Θασίων ἄρχουσι | χαίρειν· εἰ ἔρωσθε (sic), τὸ δέον ἂν εἴη, καὶ ἡμεῖς | δ' ὑγιαίνομεν. τῶν γεγονότων | φιλανθρώπων παρ' ἡμῖν τῶι πολίτῃ ὑμῶν | Διονυσόδωρῳ Περπίδῳ | ἐξαπεστάλακαμεν τὰ ἀντίγραφα | ὑποτάξαντες ὑπὸ τὴν ἐπιστολήν. The letter rather surprisingly presents a *formula valetudinis*, but lacks a final greetings; it is followed by two proxeny decrees for a Thasian (Il. 9-46).

58. Letter(?) of the Rhodians to the Thasians (Il. 1-20), followed by an annex decree of the Rhodians for Dionysodoros of Thasos (Il. 21-7), from the agora of Thasos, **first third of the first century BC**.

Dunant-Pouilloux 1958, 172 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 267, with a date around 60 BC).

The beginning of the letter (as also the end of the decree) is lost. There is no closing epistolary formula. It is possible to classify the text as a letter because of Il. 16-19 (ὑπογεγράφ[αμεν] | [δὲ κ]αὶ τοῦ ψαφίσματος, καθ' ὃ δέω[καν ἡ βου]- | [λὰ καὶ] ὁ δᾶμος τὰν προξενίαν, τὸ ἀ[ντίγραφον] | [ἵνα...])

59. Letter of a city or of a Roman proconsul to Sparta, from Sparta, **first century BC**.

IG v i, 9: *litterae vel urbis cuiusdam vel proconsulis Romani*.

[- - - Λακεδαιμο]νίων ἐφόροις καὶ | [τᾶι πόλει χαίρειν· - -]ωι ὑμῶν καὶ τῶι | [- - - τ]ῶι γραμματεῖ αὐ[τῶν - - - προσ]τάξαντες αὐ[τ]-... The rest is lost.

60. Letter of *strategoí* and *boule* of an unknown city to the *boule* and *demos* of Tegea, Tegea, first century BC.

IG v 2, 21 (cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 91, Crowther 1999: 299–300) = IPArk 6.

The beginning is partly preserved, but after l. 3 the text is lost (- -) ἐὼν στρατηγοὶ καὶ ἡ [βουλὴ] Τεγεατῶν τῇ βουλῇ καὶ | [τῷ δῆμῳ] χαίρειν. Τῶν ἐψηφισμένων τιμῶν τοῖς παρ' ὑμῶν | [ἀποσταλεῖ]σι δικασταῖς ἀπεστάλκαμεν ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντίγραφον, | [ἵνα εἰδῇτε - - -].

61. Letter of the **Delphians** to the Dionysiac *technitai* of Athens, inscribed on the wall of the treasury of the Athenians in **Delphi**, 98/97 BC, followed by a decree of the Delphians (ll. 3–61: it closes with the instruction to send a copy of the decree to the *boule* and *demos* of the Athenians, and to the *synodos* of the Dionysiac artists in Athens as well).

Fouilles de Delphes III 2:48 = Le Guen 2001, TE 14.

ll. 1–2: Δελφῶν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ ἡ πόλις τοῖς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνίταις χαίρειν. [τὰς] δοθείσας ὑφ' ἡμῶν | ἀποκρίσιος ὑπογεγράφαμεν ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντίγραφον, ὅπως εἰδῇτε. ἔρρωσθε.

62–63. Letter of the **Gephyraioi** to Delphi (preceded by a dating formula), and answer of the **Delphians** to the Gephyraioi, from the agora of Athens, 37–36 BC. An oracle of Apollo, now lost, closed the dossier.

IG ii² 1096; SEG 30, 85, 6; (cf. Follet, *Topoi* 8 (1998), 260 n. 67).

Θεο[ί] | Ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ. Ἐπὶ Θεοπείθου ἄρχοντος, τοῦ δὲ γέ[] - | νους τοῦ Γεφυραίων Φιλων[ίδου] ἄρχοντος (Follet prefers a patronymic) Παι[] - | [α]νιέως Σκιροφοριώνος [- - -] - | 5 [ἐπιστολὴ] παρὰ τοῦ γένους πρὸς Δελφούς | [Γεφυραίων] τὸ γένος Δελφῶν τῇ πόλει χαίρειν. ν φι[] - | [λί]ας ἀπ[ε]στάλκαμεν παλαιᾶς εἰς ἀνανέωσιν Θεόφιλον | Διοδώρου Ἀλαιοῦ [καὶ Παμμένην Ζήνωνος Μαραθώνιον] | - (ll. 9–14, request of the Gephyraioi, without final greeting) - | 15 ἐπιστολὴ παρὰ Δελφῶν [πρὸς] τὸ γένος [- - -] | Δελφῶν οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ <ἀ> π[ό]λις τῷ γένει τῷ Γ[εφυραίων] | χαίρειν ν Γινώσκετε τοῖς [ἀπ]εσταλ<μ>ένους ὑφ' ὑμῶν ἐπὶ | τὰν μαντείαν καὶ <ἐ>περώτασ[ιν] ὑμῶν τοῦ Βουζύγου κ[α]ὶ ἱ[ε]ρέως | [Δ]ιὸς ἐμ Παλλαδίῳ Διοτ[ίμῳ] τοῦ Διοδώρου Ἀλαιοῦ [Θε] - | ὀφίλιν Διοδώρου Ἀλαιοῦ καὶ Παμμένην Ζήνωνος Μα[ρα] - | 20 [θ]ώνιον ἀπ[ο]ρᾷ [δωκότας ἄμ]ειν τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν πεμφθέντ[α] | [γρ]άμματα περὶ τὰς μαντεῖας ([ψηφίσματα καὶ τὰς ἐπιστολὰς] Follet) καὶ ἀνανεωμένους τὰν | [ὑπάρχουσαν ποτὶ τε τὰν] πόλιν ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν θεὸν οἶ - | [κειότατα τῶν Γεφυραίων] (Follet prefers Wilhelm's οἰκειότατα καὶ φιλίαν) καὶ κεκαλλιεργήκτας καὶ | 25 [ἐπερωτακότας τὸ ἔδος? ἄ]γιον. (Follet: ἐπερωτακότας τὸ μαντ[εῖον] τὰν οὖν ἐπερώτασιν | [καὶ τὸν χρησμὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπ]εστάλμεθα π[ο]θ' ὑμῖν | [σφραγισάμενοι τῇ] δαμοσίᾳ σφρα[γίδι].

64–68: Dossier inscribed in **Delphi**, 30–25 BC, on the monument of Diodoros, with letters and city decrees.

64. Letter of **Sparta** to the Delphians, 30–25 BC.

Fouilles de Delphes III 1:487b = IG v i 1566 (with restoration at ll. 3–4: τοῦ γεγο[νότος] ὑφ' ἡμῶν δόγματος) | [Διοδώρῳ] Δωροθέῳ τῷ ὑμετέρ[ῳ] πολίτῃ ἀποστέλλο[] - ; δόγματος also in Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 81, with a date to c.29 BC.

[ἐπὶ] ἄρχοντος Πολεμάρ[χου]. | [Δ]ακεδαμονίων ἔφοροι καὶ ἡ πόλις Δελφῶν τοῖς ἄρχουσι | [καὶ τῇ πό]λει χαίρειν. τοῦ γεγο[νότος] ὑφ' ἡμῶν ψαφίσματος | [Διοδώρῳ] Δωροθέῳ τῷ ὑμετέρ[ῳ] πολίτῃ ἀπεστάλκα[] - | [μ]ειν ὑμῖν τὸ ἀντίγραφον. ἐπεὶ Διό[δωρος] Δωροθέου Δελφός] . . . Followed by a decree, missing its end.

65. Letter of the *strategos* and *synhedroi* of the *koinon* of the Thessalians to Delphi.

Fouilles de Delphes III 1: 488.

Extremely fragmentary; Bourguet restores ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος [Πολεμάρχου.] | Ἀλέξιππος σπρ[ατηγὸς τοῦ κοινοῦ τοῦ ἐν Θεσσαλ]ίαι καὶ οἱ | σύνεδροι Δ[ελφῶν τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ βουλῇ] χ[αίρειν].

66. Letter of an unidentified polis to the Delphians (text very similar to the following one).

Fouilles de Delphes III 1: 489.

67. Letter of the *doriarcheon* of the *koinon* of the Dorieis of the metropolis Charigenes to the archons and polis of Delphi, accompanying the annex decree.

Fouilles de Delphes III 1: 490 (*IG* v i 1566, cf. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 141).

ἐπὶ [ἄρχοντος Πολεμάρχου] | Χαριγένης ὁ Δοριαρχέων τοῦ κοινοῦ τῶν Δωριέων τῶν | ἐγ Ματροπόλεως Δ[ε]λ[φ]ῶν τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ ταῖ | πόλει χαίρει. Τῶν δεδομένων [τιμίων ὑπὸ τοῦ κοι] | νοῦ τῶν Δωριέων Διοδώρῳ Δωρο[θέου τῷ ὑμετέρῳ] | πολίται ἀπεστάλκαμ[ε] | ὑμῖν ἀντίγραφον τὸ ὑπογε[-] | γραμμένον. The decree follows.

68. Letter of an unidentified polis (possibly letter and decree from Hyampolis) to the Delphians.

Fouilles de Delphes III 1: 495.

69. Letter of an unidentified polis or king/emperor/consul to Sparta, very fragmentary, **Sparta, date?** The stone might actually contains remains of a sequence of two letters: a cover letter by a secretary, transmitting an official letter addressed to the Lacedaemonians.

IG v i, 10 (ll. 1–3 restored by Wilamowitz, with the annotation ‘Scriba alius doricae civitatis, rogatus a Lacedaemoniis, exemplum mittit decreti in tabulis suis adservatis’); but note *SEG* 47, 355: ‘Letter from a Hellenistic or Roman ruler?’

[- - - - - απ]- | ἐ[στ]αλμαι [- -] | τῷ ἐπ’ ἐμοῦ [- - αντί]- | γραφοῦ ρ[- -] | Λακεδαιμ[ονίων ἐφόροις καὶ] | ταῖ πόλει χαίρειν. - -].

Texts Halfway Between a Letter and a Decree

70. Decree—but with closing epistolary greeting—of Axos, inscribed in **Teos**, 201 BC.

IC 2 v 17 = Rigsby 1996, no. 140 (called ‘decreto-epistola’ in Ghinatti 2004: 125).

φαξίων. | ἔδοξεν φαξίων τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ ταῖ πόλει ψαφισμένοις | κατὰ τὸν νόμον· ἐπειδὴ (...) | 13. δεδόχθαι φαναξίων τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ ταῖ πόλει ἐπαινέσαι μὲν (...) ἀποκρίνασθαι δὲ ὅτι (...) 24. ἔρρωσθε.

71. Decree—but with closing epistolary greeting—of the Arcadians, inscribed in **Teos**, 201 BC.

IC 1 v 52 = Rigsby 1996, no. 150.

Ἀρκάδων. ἔδοξεν Ἀρκάδων τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ ταῖ πόλει· ἐπειδὴ κτλ (...) 20–1 ἀποκρίνασθαι τοῖς πριγενταῖς ὅτι ἡ πόλις (...) 29–32 τάν | τε καθιέρωσιν τῷ Διονύσῳ τὰς τε πόλιος | καὶ τὰς χώρας ὑμῶν (...) δίδομεν 45 ἔρρωσθε.

72. Decree—but with closing epistolary greeting—of the Arcadians, inscribed in **Teos**, 170 BC? Renewal of *asylia*.

IC 1 v 53 = Rigsby 1996, no. 159.

Ἀρκάδων. ἔδοξεν Ἀρκάδων τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ ταῖ πόλει· ἐπειδὴ (...) 17 τὸ πρότερον δοθέν ὑμῖν δόγμα (...) 18 δεδόχθαι ἀποκρίνασθαι (...) 50 ἔρρωσθε.

73. Decree—but with closing epistolary greeting—of **Hyrtacina**, inscribed in **Teos**, 170 BC? Renewal of *asylia*.

IC 2 xv 2 = Rigsby 1996, no. 160.

A fragmentary beginning is followed by a series of infinitives (*ἀναγράφαι*, *ἐπαινέσαι*); there are no pronouns of first and second person; conclusion with *ἔρρωσθε*.

74. Decree—but with closing epistolary greeting—of **Priansos**, inscribed in **Teos**, 170 BC?

IC 1 xxiv 1, cf. Rigsby 1996: 289.

Πριανσίων. | ἔδοξε Πριανσίων τοῖς κόσμοις καὶ τῇ πόλει. ἐπειδὴ Ἡρόδοτος Μ<η>νοδότου καὶ Μενεκλῆς Διονυ- | σίω ἔξαποσταλέντες πρεγγευταὶ πορτὶ ἀμέ πα- | 5 ρὰ Τηίων οὐ μόνον ἀνεστρά[φεν] <πρ>ε<ό>ντω<ς> ἐν τῇ | πόλει καὶ [διέλεγ]εν περὶ τὰς [.]το[. .]ας ἀλλὰ | καὶ ἐπεδείξατο Μενεκλῆς μετὰ κιθάρας τά τε Τι- | μοθέου καὶ Πολυίδου καὶ τῶν ἀμῶν παλαιῶν ποιη- | τῶν καλῶς καὶ πρεπόντως, εἰς<ή>νεγκε δὲ κύκλον | 10 ἱστορημέναν ὑπὲρ Κρήτας κα[ὶ τ]ῶν ἐν [Κρή]ται γε- | γονότων θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων, [ποι]ησάμενο[ς τ]ῶν | συναγωγὰν ἐκ πολλῶν ποιητῶ[ν] καὶ ἱστοριαγρά[φων] διὸ δεδόχθαι τῇ πόλει ἐπαινέσαι Τηίος ὅτι | πλείστον λόγον ποιῶνται περὶ παιδείας, ἐπαι- | 15 νέσαι δὲ καὶ Ἡρόδοτον καὶ Μενεκλῆν ὅτι καλὰν | καὶ πρέπονσαν πεποίηται τὴν παρεπιδημίαν | ἐν τῇ πόλει ἀμῶν διασαφῆσαι τε ταῦτα καὶ Τηί- | οῖς ὁ<π>ως ἐπιγνώσκοντι. ἔρρωσθε.

Official Letters Of Roman Magistrates Inscribed In Stone

R1. Letter of T. **Quinctius Flamininus** to the Chyretians, from **Chyretiae** in Thessaly, 197–194 BC.

Sherk 1969, no. 33; Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 166. Cf. Hofmann forthcoming.

R2. Letter of M. Valerius Messala, the *demarchoi* and the *synkletos* (heading: *Ῥωμαίων*) to the Teians, from the temple of Dionysos in **Teos**, 193 BC.

Sherk 1969, no. 34. Cf. SEG 30, 1377; Hofmann forthcoming.

R3. Letter of M. **Acilius Glabrio** to the Delphians, from **Delphi**, early in 190 BC.

Sherk 1969, no. 37, Rousset 2002b, no. 41.

R4. Letter of the consul L. **Cornelius Scipio** and his brother to Heraclea on the Latmos, 189 BC.

Sherk 1969, no. 35; Robert 1978: 501; SEG 37, 860; Ma 1999, no. 45. Cf. Hofmann forthcoming.

R5. Letter of L. **Cornelius Scipio** and his brother to the Colophonians, **Colophon**, 190–189 BC.

Sherk 1969, no. 36; Ma 1999, no. 46.

R6–R7. Letters of the praetor **Spurius Postumus** to the Delphians and to the Amphictions, from **Delphi** (same stone), 189 BC.

Sherk 1969, no. 1 A and B; *Fouilles de Delphes* III 34: 353; Rousset 2002b, no. 42; and for the second letter CID 4 104; cf. Ferrary 2009: 130.

R8. Letter of C. **Livius Salinator** to the Delphians, from **Delphi**, 188 BC.

Sherk 1969, no. 38 = Syll.³ 611 (Bagnall-Derow 2004, no. 41).

R9. Letter of a **Licinius** to the Amphictions, from **Delphi**, 186 BC?

Sherk 1969, no. 39; CID 4 105.

- R10. Letter of a Roman magistrate or legate on King Perseus to the Amphictions or the Delphians, from **Delphi**, 171–170 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 40 = *Syll.*³ 613 B (cf. *SEG* 31, 542; 45, 481).
- R11. Very fragmentary letter of the **Kerkyreis** to the Ambrakiotai, inscribed in **Kerkyra**, **mid-second century BC**, preceded by a letter of **P. Cornelius Blasio** to the Kerkyreis with attached *senatus consultum*.
IG ix 1² 796B; Sherk 1969, no. 4; *SEG* 47, 604.
- R12. Letter of M. Aemilius to the Mylasaeans, from **Magnesia**, accompanying a *senatus consultum* on the dispute between the Magnesians and the Prieneans, **mid-second century BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 7; Ager 1996, no. 120.
- R13–R16. Three letters of the consul **L. Mummius** to the Argives, and one from him to the Sicyonians, all inscribed in **Argos**, **post 146 BC**.
Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 69–70, 76, and 97.
- R17: A letter (unpublished) of **Q. Fabius Maximus** to Dyme in Achaia, from **Argos**, part of a dossier including the preceding letters, **144 BC**.
Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 97.
- R18. Letter of **Q. Fabius Maximus** to the Dymaeans, from **Dyme**.
Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 97, Kallet-Marx 1995: 129–53, date 144 BC? (Sherk 1969, no. 43, 115 BC?)
- R19–R20. Two letters of **Roman magistrates** to the associations of Dionysiac artists, very fragmentary, from **Thebes**, **second half of the second century BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 44, *IG* vii 2413 and 2414; Le Guen 2001, nos. 34 and 51.
- R21. Letter of a **Roman magistrate** to the Amphictions (very fragmentary), from **Delphi**, **c.120–115 or 117–116 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 42; *CID* 4 119 A (cf. Ferrary in Rousset 2002b).
- R22. Letter of **L. Calpurnius Piso** to the Itanians, from **Itanos** in Crete, accompanying a *senatus consultum* on the dispute between Itanos and Hierapytna, **112 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 14; Ager 1996, no. 158 (cf. *SEG* 2, 511).
- R23. Letter (fragmentary) of the *grammateus* of the *synhedrion* Xenon to the *strategoï* (ll. 17–21), preceded by a letter of a **Roman magistrate** (?) to the Carystians or Euboians, and followed by a *hypomnema*, from **Carystos**, **second century BC**.
IG xii 9, 5.
- R24. Letter of **P. Sextilius** to the Triccaeans, from **Tricca** in Thessaly, accompanying a *senatus consultum*, **second century BC**?
Sherk 1969, no. 8.
- R25. Letter of someone (a Roman magistrate?) to the Triccaeans, from **Tricca** in Thessaly, concerning an arbitration, **second century BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 45 (*IG* ix 2, 301).
- R25bis. Letter of someone (a Roman magistrate?) to the magistrates and the people of **Kyparissos**, **Kyparissos**, **second–first century BC**.
Messenia, *SEG* 11, 1025; Sherk 1969, no. 46. Cf. Greek list above, no. 53.
- R26–R27. Two letters of **Q. Mucius Scaevola**, respectively to the Sardianoi and to the Ephesians, concerning (and accompanying) the treaty between Sardis and Ephesus, from **Pergamum**, **98–97 or 94–93 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 47; *SEG* 38, 1267; Ager 1996, no. 170.

- R28. Letter of C. **Cassius** to the Nysaeans concerning Chairemon (followed by two letters of Mithridates to his satrap Leonippos), from Akça (Nysa) in Caria, 88 BC. (A strange letter, obviously translated from Latin; no final formula.)
Sherk 1969, no. 49 (*Syll.*³ 741).
- R29–R30. Letters of **Sulla** and of the quaestor propraetore **Lucullus** confirming inviolability to the temple of Isis and Sarapis at Mopsuestia, from **Mopsuestia**, probably shortly after 85 BC and in 86 BC respectively.
SEG 44, 1227; Rigsby 1996, no. 217; cf. SEG 56, 1801.
- R31. Letter of the proconsul **Q. Oppius** to the Paraseis and **Aphrodisieis**, 85 BC (but inscribed in a dossier dated to the second century AD).
Reynolds 1982, no. 3 (*InsAph* 8.2).
- R31bis. Letter of an **unidentified** city or of a proconsul to Sparta, from **Sparta**, first century BC.
IG v i, 9: *litterae vel urbis cuiusdam vel proconsulis Romani* (cf. Greek list above, no. 59).
- R32–R33. Letters of **L. Cornelius Sulla** to the Coans concerning the Dionysiac artists, and to the Dionysiac artists (followed by a decree of the Senate now lost), from **Cos**, respectively c.84 and 81 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 49; le Guen 2001, no. 56.
- R34–R35. Two letters of **Sulla** to the Stratoniceans, followed by a *senatus consultum*, from the temple of Hekate at **Lagina** in Caria, 81 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 18; *I. Stratonikeia* 505.
- R36. Letter of **L. Cornelius Sulla** to the Thasians, accompanying a *senatus consultum*, from **Thasos**, 80 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 20; SEG 18, 349.
- R37–R38. Two letters of Cn. Cornelius Dolabella to the Thasians, discussing the above-mentioned *senatus consultum* and referring to other letters sent to the Peparethians and Skiathians, from **Thasos**; same stone as R48 below, 80 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 21.
- R39. Letter of the consuls **M. Terentius Varro Lucullus** and **C. Cassius Longinus** to the Oropians, with summary of documents and *senatus consultum*, from **Oropos**, 73 BC.
Sherk 1969 no. 23; *Epigr. tou Oropou* 308, IG vii 413.
- R40. Letter of a **Roman magistrate** (the governor of Asia) to the Mytilenaeans (very fragmentary), from **Mytilene**, post 55 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 51.
- R41. Letter of a **Roman magistrate** to the Milesians, the Ephesians, the Trallianoi, the Alabandeis, the Mylaseis, the Smyrnaioi, the Pergamenois, the Sardonioi, and the Adramyttinoi, from **Miletos** and **Priene** (two copies), 51–50 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 52; SEG 50, 1178; cf. Ferrary 2009: 135–8.
- R42. Letter (very fragmentary) of a **Roman magistrate** to Ilion, from **Ilion**, first century BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 53; *I. Ilion* 77.
- R43–R44–R45. Three letters of **C. Iulius Caesar** to the Mytilenaeans, from **Mytilene**, 48 to 45 BC. (Part of a dossier including also two *senatus consulta* passed in 25 BC, and a treaty).
Sherk 1969, no. 26.
- R46. Letter of **C. Iulius Caesar** to the Pergamenois, from **Smyrna** (part of a dossier which must have been engraved in many cities), accompanying a decision, post 48 BC (Pharsalos).
Sherk 1969, no. 54; Rigsby 1996, no. 180.

- R47. Letter of **P. Servilius Isauricus** to the Pergamenoι, concerning the *asylia* of the Asklepieion, from **Pergamon**, 46–44 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 55; Rigsby 1996, no. 181.
- R48. Letter of **L. Sestius Quirinalis** to the Thasians, from Thasos (part of a dossier inscribed on the same stone as nos. R37 and R38 above), 44–42 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 56.
- R49. Covering letter of **M. Antonius** (entirely erased after Actium) accompanying a *δελοτογράφημα* of Caesar granting the right of asylum to the temple of Artemis in Sardis, **Sardis**, 44/43 BC.
SEG 39, 1290; Rigsby 1996, no. 214
- R50. Letter of **M. Antonius** to the *koinon Asiae*, from **Tralles** (but probably inscribed in **Smyrna**), 42–41 or 33–32 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 57.
- R51. Letter of **Octavian** to Plarasa/Aphrodisias, from **Aphrodisias**, 39–38 BC.
Reynolds 1982, no. 6 (Sherk 1969, no. 28A; *InsAph* 8. 25).
- R52–R53–R54. Letters of **Octavian** to the inhabitants of Rhosos concerning Seleukos, from **Rhosos** in Syria, the first one (probably 42 BC) accompanying a decree, the two others (31–30 BC) independent.
Sherk 1969, no. 58; SEG 54, 1625.
- R55. Letter of a **Roman magistrate** (fragmentary) to the Mylaseis, from **Mylasa**, post 39 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 59; *I. Mylasa* 601.
- R56. Letter of **Octavian** to Stephanos, from Aphrodisias, 39–38 BC.
Reynolds 1982, no. 10 (*InsAph* 8. 29).
- R57. Letter of **Stephanos** to Plarasa / Aphrodisias, 39–38 BC.
Reynolds 1982, no. 11 (*InsAph* 8. 30).
- R58. Letter of **Octavian** to Ephesus, from Aphrodisias, 39–38 BC.
Reynolds 1982 no. 12 (*InsAph* 8. 31).
- R59. Letter of **Octavian** to the Mylaseis, from **Mylasa**, 31 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 60; *I. Mylasa* 602.
- R60–R61–R62: group of letters, most of them very fragmentary and of uncertain date, from Ephesos. Note (a) SEG 43, 768: extremely fragmentary letter (it might actually be the beginning of the letter SEG 43, 757), addressed to the *gerousia* of Ephesos, dated by the letter-shape to the second half of the first century BC; (b) SEG 43, 757: second century AD copy of a letter of Caesar or Octavian, extremely fragmentary; (c) SEG 43, 758: second century AD copy of letter of Octavian addressed to the council and the people of Ephesos, 29 BC. Three other letters, of which almost nothing remains, and whose date is uncertain, were part of this archive (SEG 43, 769–71), as well as a further eight letters, of imperial date.
- R63. Letter (in Latin and with fragmentary Greek translation) of a **Vinicius**, preceded by a *iussum* of Augustus and Agrippa, to the Cumaeans, from **Kyme** in Asia, 27 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 61.
- R64. Letter of **M. Agrippa** to the Argive *gerousia* (the stone has also an inscription in honour of Alexander of Sicyon), from **Argos**, 17–16 BC.
Sherk 1969, no. 63.

- R65.** Letter of **Augustus** (very fragmentary; traces of another letter as well?) to the Eresians, from **Eresos**, **post 15 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 64.
- R66.** Letter of **C. Norbanus Flaccus** to Aizanoi, confirming earlier decisions mentioned in a letter of Augustus, **Aizanoi**, between **19 and 10 BC**.
MAMA IX 13; Wörrle, *Chiron* 41 (2011), 357–76.
- R67.** Letter of **P. Fabius Maximus** to the *koinon* of the Greeks of Asia (preserved in Greek and Latin, both versions very fragmentary), followed by two decrees of the *koinon*, from **Apameia**, **Priene**, **Eumeneia**, **Dorylaion**, and **Maeonia**, **c.9 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 65, Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 396.
- R68.** Letter of **P. Cornelius Scipio** to the Thyatirenoi (possibly followed by a local decree), from **Thyatira**, **10–6 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 66.
- R69.** Letter of **Augustus** to the Cnidians (followed by a letter of Hadrian to the Astypalaeans) concerning a murder affair, from **Astypalaea**, second half of **6 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 67.
- R70.** Letter of **Augustus** to the Sardonians, answering a decree of the city (all part of a dossier of twelve documents related to a citizen of Sardis called Menogenes), from **Sardis**, **5 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 68.
- R71.** Letter of **Cn. Cornelius Lentulus** to the Nysaeans, inscribed in the context of the restoration of all the sacred writings by the *strategos* of Nysa Artemidoros and part of a huge dossier, from **Nysa**, **1 BC**.
Sherk 1969, no. 69.

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